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LITTLE WHITE LIES

Truth & Movies

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The Silence of Lorna Issue

Deconstructing
The Dardennes



**"THAT'S
THE LORNA
I REMEMBER."**

DESIGNED BY LORNA FOR
PAUL WILLOUGHBY
with a touch of LORNA inspired by
MATT BOCHENSKI

CHAPTER ONE

In which we discuss
the Silence of Lorna.



THE
FUTURE
OF
FASHION
IS
HERE

DESIGNER: JACQUELINE
KORNER, LEE KORNER
SHIRTS: AM. JEWELRY
JEWELRY: JACQUELINE
KORNER

WILLIAM
WILLIAM





In the end, it always comes back to the beginning. In *Rosetta*, it's the moment-by-moment struggle for survival. In *The Son*, it's a ghost returned from the past. In *The Child*, it's the bond between mother and son. In *The Silence of Lorna*, it's a fistful of money. It belongs to an Albanian immigrant, Lorna (Arta Dobroshi), and this opening frame signals that here is a film in which economic reality will have the final, sorry say; where Lorna won't fall out of love, she'll go out of business.

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardé are one step back on the grim, grey streets of Liège, shooting what Truffaut once called the cinema of the first-person singular: where ethics and aesthetics combine to portray a bleak vision of modern life.

The Silence of Lorna is a patchy black fable about the dehumanising effects of life in this new Europe, an economic experiment in which the poor are left to fight for survival. It returns to the motifs that the brothers have been exploring since their 1992 drama *I Think of You*: the selfishness and desperation of poverty, the impossibility of love, the inevitability of betrayal.

Despite a recent surge of pretenders to the throne – Ulrich Seidl (*Import/Export*), Lukas Moodysson (*Julie & Julia*), Theodoros Angelopoulos (*The Weeping Meadow*) and the lion's share of New Belgian Cinema – this is the class, bleak realism that the Dardennes still do better than anybody. And if it's not exactly a barrel of laughs, nor is it worthy liberal cinema. The Dardennes don't make films that feel snugly satisfied with their powers of empathy. They whip the narrative like a racehorse, shouting with a precision and urgency that makes their work as much an intellectual as an intellectual experience.

And though there is much in *The Silence of Lorna* to tie it to their previous films, there is also a more profound sense of moral ambivalence that sets it apart. The Dardennes make trajectory films, in which the struggle for survival efforts reveal moments of spiritual grace. Often the experience is painful – in *Rosetta*, it's only in the film's final moment that Grosse Coqueraine is literally and metaphorically pulled off her knees, in *The Child*, Bruno, the petty thief and misguided father, takes ungainly steps from adolescence to adulthood, but won't reflect on the journey until it's already too late. ▼





The Silence of Lorna examines this trajectory. When we first meet her, Lorna looks an unlikely subject for the life lessons headed her way. She has savings, a boyfriend, the dreams and delusions of a normal 30-something, well equipped to succeed in a harsh and unyielding world, because she's smart and unyielding herself.

Lorna has been brought to Belgium by Fabio (Fabrizio Rongione), a small-time hustler who marries Belgian women to Russian businessmen in order to acquire legal papers. To get her own papers, she's been backed up with a Belgian junkie, Claudy (Jérémie Renier), whose death is the only thing standing in the way of the scam.

As Claudy, Jérémie Renier has taken Bruno and imagined a life in which all his lessons remained unknown. It's a life in which the mistakes got incrementally worse until he found himself alone and addicted—edgy good looks abating in to nothing. But like Bruno, Claudy is an innocent of sorts, driven by instincts he can't control. Lorna rejects him, waiting and hoping for Claudy to OD so her life can get underway, but as he struggles against addiction, Lorna's conscience is pricked, and it's here that her story is turned on its head.

Compassion will be her undoing. In a touching scene in the hospital where Claudy is recovering from his withdrawal, Lorna stares at him,

silently sleeping, perhaps seeing her own vulnerability reflected in his. Sleep is a securing theme for *woes and misadventures*: "Let me sleep, Claudy!" Lorna begs him in an early scene that tragically foreshadows the film's conclusion. But in the savage violence consumed by the Dardenne, goodness is weakness. In reaching out to Claudy to save her, Lorna will also betray him—her first, fatal sin: the failure to warn Claudy that Fabio will kill him whether he survives his addiction or not.

Her complexity is disguised by a brutal transition. As Lorna sorts through Claudy's few, pathetic possessions, it looks like a loving domestic act. But then the truth is revealed—Claudy has been killed—casually, off camera tossed away like a piece of rubbish. It's an astonishingly cruel summation of the value of his life, and points in a way to one of the problems with the film.

This Dardenne may be humanists, but there's a vein of ugliness in *The Silence of Lorna* that makes you wonder if they care for the character as much as you will. Call it "real life" if you like, but all times their choices border not just on the forensic, but the sadistic. There are two big narrative shifts which are unveiled with such perverse timing that it's less an emotional juxtaposition than victimization. Perhaps it's a mark of the film's success, that you feel for Lorna as she's buffeted by these course gases, but as she's slowly stripped of illusions, it's not compassion, then dignity, then sanity, it becomes an uncomfortably voyeuristic experience.



That the film doesn't flip over completely into melodrama is due largely to the Dardenne's signature style. The handheld camera, the natural lighting and ambient sound all keep the narrative anchored in reality, however hostile and unsettlingly coldest it may seem. It's an affecting, almost ethereal style that's nevertheless predicated on pinpoint accuracy and exhaustive discipline. It betrays their documentary roots, but it's also a very rigid style that sacrifices the richness of visual metaphor for a more literal approach to narrative.

If it's visual depth you're looking for then stare into the eyes of Arta Dobroshi. The Dardenne wish bringing new faces to the screen, but the sense of expectation can't detract from the fact that Dobroshi is sensational as Lora, drawing on a reservoir of primal energy to sustain a performance of raw intensity. Lora goes through a spectrum of experiences, but the constant thread is a kind of accidental vulnerability that Dobroshi's first, boyish face perfectly captures. Despite her magnetic attraction, she conveys the anguish of a woman who has lost her place in the world. "Do you remember me?" she asks a nurse in the hospital. "And my husband?" With her sense of self stripped away, Lora exists only as others see her – in their eyes, but not her own. From here, her life spirals rapidly out of control, stripped of everything except guilt, her own silence amplified by the emptiness inside her. Struggling through a forest, she cuts a gnom figure like

some ruined Red Riding Hood alone in the hunter's cottage. It's here that Lora will finally let her sleep – and no nightmare could be worse than those that life has already thrown at her.

And it's here, too, that the silence the Dardenne are pointing towards hits home. For people like Lora, the economic migrants drifting through this new, borderless Europe, there is no home, there are no roots, there is no history and no ultimately there is no voice. Just silent, lonely suffering. ■

Anticipation: Europe's modern wasteland and consequences of failure. This is what cinema is made for. **Yes**

Enjoyment: Surprisingly bleak but profoundly moving with a timeless central performance. **Yes**

In Retrospect: Smart, sophisticated, multidimensional and awfully engaging – this one is worth many times. **Yes**

Take a trip to page 32 for an interview with Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, and page 38 for an interview with Arta Dobroshi.





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"Art belongs to the people. It must have its origins
in the life of masses of workers. It must be
understood and loved by them. It must be used to
and grow with their feelings, thoughts and desires.
It must express and develop the spirit in them. Are
we to give color and vigor to a new world when the
masses of workers and peasants still look blankly on it?"

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

CHAPTER TWO (in which we introduce ourselves.)

EWides:

What is it you love about movies?

Jean-Pierre Verdunne:

I don't know. To work together. It's something we've done for so long, we don't know how to change. It's teamwork. It's when you see some characters that really exist, come to life, and surprise us. Because they're human beings.

Arto Dobroszki:

About movies? I didn't expect that you were going to ask me this question. I love acting, really. I never thought what it is that I love about movies. When I started acting I thought it began to be my passion and that I didn't even have time to think, "What is it that I love?" because the emotion got me.

So for me it was the energy, to tell a story. For example, after somebody sees your movie they come out full of emotions, they want to hug you - so you really did give them a little story with lots of emotions. Maybe sometimes you learn something and sometimes you learn nothing but you can summon emotions.

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How Many Years Good

Phyllonoma and *Phyllonoma*

Discussion

Measure 2: Education

Example of Item 10:



Can we live a unique ability to affect the lives of
and influence on so many levels, not just in the way
on an emotional level. Everyone has a unique special-
ness, whether it's being raised as a child, growing
as an adult or being raised by a thought-provoking
masterpiece. There have been many who can change
people, and there are few things that few opportunities
to truly make and to connect you have never met and
change the way they think or feel completely.

There are no experiences, no emotions,
a confirmation, and an inner peace.

Lucy Robert



It's a flower is at hand You can learn
from other people's experiences, and hopefully
and similar mistakes, too. And it's also an
example, an experience, as if by magic you've
in a different world, a different dimension,
a different time zone.

John Murphy



There's little evidence forward
that happens every year and again
when it all comes together, and
you really don't even log off
out of your window
Or rather you not!

James Clark



Normal thought it was a great
moment. Actually I prefer to see my
in one that makes, a little less and it's
more to pick up a girl when you talk
about how much she's interested in.
No Country for Old Men that when
you show your stage success in
your children.

John Thomas



There's the type of change you see and the struggles of "Sweet
me" but they make. There the quiet moments of watching in
line to buy my kids. There smoking with such satisfaction
and completely waiting for the smoke to start. There smiling
into a cloudy blue with a patch of clouds, and wondering why
smoke in the light is in the sun and the smoke in my eyes for the
unpredictable times. There being so close to the sun of change
new people and places. There the journey never takes me any
the way they can challenge my perception and thought. There the
shared laughs amongst friends, the hardest talking of times and
the silly ways we try to hide from many moments. There the hope,
delight, frustration, anger, sadness and relief they make me feel as
they're usually magical in my moments. There that, even if the
smoke's outside, you can't see or guess about it with your nose.
Finally, there the silent silent way they and each other are
sometimes shared, sometimes unshared, to watch can see the
old, laughs again and movement with reality.

Martha Knight

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CHAPTER THREE

In which we discuss
themes of uncommon
interest inspired by
our feature film.

THE BROTHERS GRIM

LWILLYS TRAVELS TO LIÈGE TO SPEND A DAY IN
THE LIFE OF THE DARDENNE BROTHERS

*Words by James Scully
Photography by David W. Douglas*



Left to right: Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne

I

t seems a suitably grey day to meet the Dardenne brothers. Léon is overcast, caught in a dull light that pools at colour to the washed palette of their films. Characters from an unshot production people the streets, wearing the well-worn clothes and wary-eyed faces of hardship. It is, I've to excuse the cliché, a bit grey.

It's only natural to expect the Dardenne films to be somber. While their films are full of warmth for the toilers and fundamental goodness of humanity, their dramatic concerns remain overwhelmingly anxious: their characters caught on the margins of society, where morality is challenged by necessity. It's a pleasant surprise to find that they are such good company.

Jean-Pierre Dardenne is more physically expressive than his younger brother Luc, frequently breaking into a grin that's equal parts generous, sly and conspiratorial. His tongue is often – literally – in his cheek, pushing his mouth out into vulgar snarls. Luc is more somber, his eyelids drooped, head dipped, gazing up through drowsy eyes at the world's noxious. But as he talks, he seems to the task, becoming even more animated than his brother.

Between entering on location, the Dardenne make some 50 documentaries, which, like their fiction films, examined the working lives of the people of Léon. What, if anything, did the experience teach them? That everything is possible, which isn't true when you're making documentaries," answers Jean-Pierre. "We like to take a film to wherever we want to, but in a documentary you have to go to certain places. In fiction you have more freedom, more money. But when we shoot our films we still give ourselves the obligations that perhaps another director wouldn't, which has helped us as a kind of discipline when shooting."

This obligation – to the accurate reconstruction of reality – is hardly new. The Dardenne have been compared to Robert Bresson. Mike Leigh and Roberto Rossellini, who Luc describes as their "model". But in truth, the Dardenne have gradually defined a unique style that borrows heavily from both documentary and fiction. Their technique appears at first documentary but in fact reconstitutes subjectivity: the camera clinging to the key character's shoulders in artificial embrace, a sharp contrast to the wall-hugging objectivity of traditional documentary.

What's interesting to consider is whether their films would have even more power if they were still making documentaries. "Our [fiction] films have more power," argues Luc. "They can reach the truth that we wouldn't be able to with documentary. Documentary is also constructed. There are places you can't film. There are things you can't do. If you are filming a documentary you would never be able to film someone planning or committing a murder. There are lots of things that would be forbidden to film, like a company laying off employees. With fiction you can enter a secret, you can go into things you wouldn't be allowed to in real life. With a documentary you can too, but there are restrictions. You can only reach for the truth."

"Lion's truth wouldn't be possible in documentary," adds Jean-Pierre. "What would be possible is to meet someone who's gone through the same experience as Lion's, but after it's happened." So the transition to fiction is about escaping restrictions? "Pretty, yes," he agrees. "In documentaries we don't treat people in a subtle sense, and the people didn't always agree with what they were asked to do. So it's easier to work with actors."

"What annoys me is when they manipulate people in documentaries," continues Luc. "It's normal that you tend to make you really think you believe. What you see in documentary isn't really the truth. It's an effect so we can understand one another without actually speaking – saying the unsaid. It's an understanding without words, a dumb contract. When you film something, words aren't necessary, the spectator can understand without being told that what they see happened. Now in documentaries what they do is manipulate and make things much more dramatic than they probably were – more emotions, more sensations. That's the problem we had when shooting documentaries because we didn't want to force people to do things they didn't want to do."

While the Dardenne may have made the leap from documentary to fiction, they have remained steadfastly committed to their hometown. Léon's nickname is 'The Burning City' (La Cité Ardente), inspired by its enthralling landscape of forges and smokestacks. The first industrialised area of continental Europe, it grew rich from an abundance of water, coal, iron and labour. The entire valley – the 'Bassin de Wallonie' – became one of the most important centres of steel production in the world. Today following decades of industrial decline, 'The Burning City' might just as well apply to the furnace of tensions that fuel the Dardenne's films – unemployment, poverty, immigration. ▼





"IT'S BETTER TO
WORK FOR YOUR
MONEY THAN BEG.
IT'S DEGRADING
ALWAYS HAVING
TO ASK FOR
SOMETHING."

In particular, the *Dadennes* have concentrated their stories in the working-class district of Seneffe, which has suffered particularly badly from the decline of the city's steel industry. Seneffe's recent problems are vividly illustrated by Luc, who, when asked how to prosecute the new openness, suggests "Seneffe" ("Syringer"), illustrating the pun by placing one hand on his arm and mimicking a judge shouting up.

"This is where we spend our time, even though there's nothing very fascinating about it," offers Jean-Pierre. "For a good 30 years it's changed, lots of factories have closed and so lots of characters from our films appeared due to this. They probably already existed before but they weren't in films. Even if our films are more interested in the characters than the décor, we show that too."

Even before de-industrialisation, Liege's identity was complicated by the geography and history of Wallonia, the south Belgian district of which it is part. Positioned on the political, cultural and linguistic borders of Germany, France and Holland, its identity defies the simple borders of national boundaries. "As this is where we're born, where we live, it's difficult to take a step out of and not see what the true characteristics really are," continues Jean-Pierre. "We're a bilingual part of the country, even trilingual: German, French and Dutch. Here we speak French. But it's not our country. It's not a French history, it's a different history."

"If we really have to say, we would say that the films are made in Wallonia, from Wallonia, with the people working in the factories here. We're not from the big city. It's the town where we went to school, so when we make our films we think about the people we've met," says Luc.

"The stories we tell, maybe *The Silence of Lams*, could be told anywhere in the West, in Europe," adds Jean-Pierre. "In a rich country where anyone foreign wants to come thinking that things might be better if it's not particular to Belgium. The welcome here isn't better than other countries."

Is it worse? "Not worse than in France," he says, "not worse than in Holland. I don't know about England. There's no anti-immigrant campaign here like there was in England with the Polish people, though there is an extreme right movement in the Flemish part of the country."

Immigration has occurred as it has in the *Dadennes* films, but it is less an issue per se than a means to explore the assorted motifs of identity and recognition. Similarly, recurring *Dadennes* storylines of motherhood, petty crime and manual labour seem less important than the transition these narratives signify – from childhood innocence to adult responsibilities. In this sense, even parenthood is a manual job. Indeed, it's a dramatic interest that borders on the obsessive. "We're not sure if we're obsessive," counters Jean-Pierre. "It's true that in our films all the characters have manual activities, but this is so we relate to the characters in terms of what we see them doing, in terms of gestures, rather than what the characters actually say."

Brussels-based film historian Wouter Hanen has described the role of workplaces in the *Dadennes* films as signifying "a common place of recognition", but it has seemed less to tell if labour should be seen as dignifying – as giving freedom – or as limiting freedom and making one dependent. "It is a way of being recognised for all people. Of integrating into society," explains Luc. "For parents, unemployment can bring shame in not being able to provide for your children. It can give you an image that you wouldn't otherwise have. But labour can also be a constraint and make you suffer. It's complicated: complex. It's like *Glenn*, the carpenter in *The Zoo*, who teaches the boy. When you have a job you're worth something. Because you know how to, you have a skill."

"It's better to work for your money than beg," suggests Jean-Pierre. "It's degraded always having to ask for something. Solidarity of the workers brings them together so they can ask for better working conditions."

"In India today they killed their boss because they were all laid off," continues Luc. "I don't think they should have done it but this shows the need to have a job."

But that doesn't mean that everybody wants to work. In *The Choir*, Bruno, played by Jérôme Renier, contemptuously announces that "only fuckers work." "Well, stealing is also a job. But you have no insurance and if you get shot you have no life money," despairs Luc. "Religion makes you believe in labour as passion. But it's not, it's a politician's way of transforming something into something else. It's the real punishment for Man. In a psychiatric hospital where people suffer from depression, work is a way to make them feel better." ▼

And where, then, does this leave the brothers politically? "More Left than Right," says Jean-Pierre, "but there's something about the Left that's destructive. They always feel that they are right. Lots of people on the Left are cynical and don't feel guilty about anything."

"There's Left and 'Left,'" suggests Luc. "We need a positive conception of the state. We criticize income tax but it provides solidarity, the freedom to do things. But they have to be able to defend it. They have to show things in a positive way. To regulate the market in the name of social solidarity."

The Dardenne's protagonists are notably almost always hard working, employmented in their pursuit of a paying job – no matter how menial – and protective of something, usually someone. This responsibility is often driven as much by obligation as by love or faith: Igor in *The Promise*, driven by guilt and goodness to protect a dying man's wife and baby, Rosette caught between contempt and concern for her alcoholic mother, Glaser mourning the boy who killed his child, and Lorne torn apart by her marriage of convenience and her conflicting feelings for husband Claudy.

This is a dramatic universe populated by decent people thrown in the shit and trying – desperately – to swim. Even Bruno, who commits the ultimate betrayal by selling his own child, is offered the chance of redemption. For all that their films are an echo chamber for the bleakness and hostility in the world, the Dardenne are always striving to find the good in people. "It is very important that we love all our characters," agrees Jean-Pierre. "It doesn't mean that we agree with everything they do, but we have to give them all the richness you find in a human being, even though they're bastards. We spend a lot of time with them. For the actor it's the same thing. Fabrice, who plays Fabio [in *The Silence of Lorne*], he has to like Fabio or else it won't be a character. They give the main character the possibility of change. To become something else. They're not alone in the world."

"In Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*, you like the main character. The guy who kills women while filming. When the film came out a lot of people thought it was disgusting, immoral," says Luc. "But that was great; we're not there for morals. We're there to try and understand a human being, why he would kill. I loved this character because in reality I would stop him. It helps us as individuals because we're also implicated, but as filmmakers in particular."

"It gives the spectator possibilities," continues Jean-Pierre. "Lorne is a spectator, while she is also in fact an accomplice. Equally, the spectator goes through things that normally they wouldn't do in real life. If the spectator was there in real life, they would go and warn the police that someone was going to get killed. But in the film you can be with her, relate to her."

There are any number of repeated motifs in the Dardenne's films, but two seem particularly recurrent of their subtexts. One, used in *Rosette*, *The Child* and *The Silence of Lorne*, is a scene where the protagonist crosses a motorway.

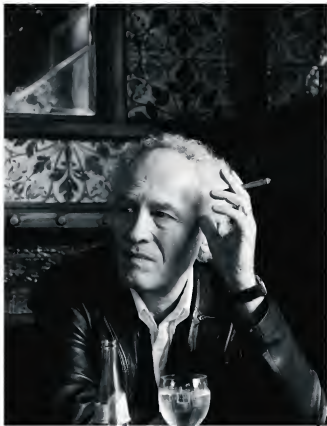
"In *The Child* the motorway represents the border between countries," explains Luc. "She's crossing the road with the baby of Bruno is to create danger. So the spectator is scared. And for Lorne, we want to put other people around her who ignore her secrets and the way she thinks to give more relief to her secrets. She is a woman who likes the night, only a little night. The truth is that we like this image of people crossing the road with traffic. We all try to cross a road, we all try to survive like in real life. It's a picture of life, it represents life."

"It's putting them in dangerous situations," offers Jean-Pierre. "When we shoot, we try to make the traffic drive as fast as it normally would, to get that feeling – to transmit more danger if we really let it go, less we'd have an accident. With the traffic they are really scared. We try not to show that we are controlling the traffic so that everyone has that sense of danger."

In addition to conveying danger and establishing a symbolic border, the mounting motorway motif draws an explicit connection between vulnerability and poverty. The characters in the Dardenne's films are almost always on foot, walking or running from place to place.

When, as with Igor in *The Promise* or Bruno in *The Child*, a character owns a means of transport, it is wished as something luxurious and liberating. On foot the character is reduced to a childlike, even primal state. When Rosette crosses the motorway she scampers, head down, pitiful and desperate. ▼

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A similarly recurring motif is that of the principal character burying objects in the earth – Rosetta with her few earnings stuck in the ground under a trailer and her precious boots secreted in a concrete pipe, or Igor burying the wallet he has just stolen from an elderly woman. On its simplest level this is an obvious metaphor for the Dardenennes' narrative preoccupation with secrets and lies. "That's the way that our films are made," says Luc. "There's always something hidden. There's always a concrete reason for them to say that whatever you see, you can't see everything there it. For instance, Astou's funeral [in *The Promise*]. That's the way the world is. A buried body, some kind of guilty secret, a feeling of shame."

But these "gestures", as the Dardenennes might call them, communicate something far more complex. When burying their secrets, the Dardenennes' characters always do it barehanded, with no ceremony, reaching straight down and digging into the bare earth – depositing their secrets like a cat guiltily burying its own shit.

This symbolism is shadowed by a mis-en-scène that includes the earth, the grass, the semi-urban landscape of verges, bridges and underpasses as dramatic scenery. On these margins – moral, social, physical – the Dardenennes attempt to balance with dignity, like Rosette fishing in the city river with a bottle. Somehow, this objective sympathy for the sensual experience of their characters seems to transcend the very cold, the smell of grass and smoke, the touch of water or earth: to an extent unparalleled by their contemporaries in social realism.

They repeatedly use not just the same actors (most obviously Olivier Gourmet and Jérémie Renier), but the same crew (including DoP Alain Mercier and editor Marie-Hélène Doze), who form part of what they happily term their "family". "We can really talk to them, which means we're not there to protect our own image, we're there to bring characters to life – characters that didn't exist before we started shooting," explains Jean-Pierre.

This ethos of familial loyalty is most obviously represented in the relationship between Jean-Pierre and Luc themselves. Surely they must have their artistic differences? "No, otherwise we wouldn't work together," says Jean-Pierre.

"We can criticise each other," Luc qualifies. "If one of us takes a decision with an actor, we try it the other way round, and the other one agrees. It's quite rare for one of us to say something and for the other to say 'no'. We shoot facing one way, the other way, facing sideways, faster, slower. It's not that one thinks one should do faster or slower; we think we should try different ways. The shoot lasts 25 minutes, so we know we can cut it, and keep one or two minutes. We don't know how the film will be when we put it all together."

We wander out from the their production offices overlooking the broad River Meuse that carved the industrial valley and fed its factories. Jean-Pierre points out a bar. "If you go in, you go out to the margin," he says. Its patrons look like something out of an archetypal southern US saloon bar – massive, bearded, bearded and in a bad mood. Jean-Pierre talks of the depressing sight of young people on the cusp of heroin addiction, and their quick descent away from life. It's a reminder, conscious or not, that the Liège-deploied in their films is far real, and their concern for it is heartfelt.

At a more welcoming local bar we take some pictures but the brothers seem less comfortable than in the interview, relaxing more only after the arrival of Arto Delmouli, who turns out to be casually luminous in front of the camera. As we leave, and reach to pay the bill, the owner kindly offers the drinks on the house. "That doesn't happen everywhere," says Jean-Pierre. It undoubtedly doesn't, but it's good to see that the brothers are not just the darlings of Cannes, but also the favoured sons of Liège.

These two Palmes d'Or; what do they signify? "Being recognised," replies Jean-Pierre. "Even if we know it was given by 10 or 11 people and if it had happened to be another 10 or 11 we wouldn't have got it, it gave us the international recognition we wouldn't have got without it."

"It's a good souvenir," says Luc. "Unfortunately, they're not made of real gold. There's a lot of them. They're not heavy. They're plated."

And where are they? "We buried them," says Luc, before adding after a pause, "A little joke." ■

With thanks to our translator, Alison Taylor

The story of the Dardenenne brothers can't be told in isolation. Over the next 12 pages, we track down some of the key collaborators who know their best bet to get all the angles on this unique filmmaking partnership

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JÉRÉMIE RENIER

THE DARDENNES' SURROGATE SON IS ALL GROWN UP

Words by Jonathan Creaker
Photography by Christine Hume

Filial and Mastrolini, Herzog and Knaul, Whorwell and Hauer. There's a long tradition among European auteurs — high and low — of channeling through a choice editor. But the Dardenne brothers buck the trend: switching editors with each film, plucking nobodies and non-professionals out of obscurity, then moving on.

That is, apart from Jérémie Renier. They gave him his big bow in their breakout drama *The Promise*, signed him up again for *Palme d'Or* winner *The Child*, and when they needed someone to play a fractured justice in *The Silence of Lame*, guess who got a call? "It's incredible," shrugs Renier, chatting to *LOUPE* in Belgium. "It's like *The Child*, 10 years after [*The Promise*]: I had no idea that they would want to cast me again. Incredible — 10 years after! Jean-Pierre called me and said he and his brother would like to see me in Brussels. Just like that. I said, 'Hey, no problem.'"

In the decade since his terrific performance in *The Promise* as a kid caught in a moral headlock between his father and a dying man's last wish, Renier has slipped in and out on the radar of European cinema. He's worked with François Ozon (*Graveyard Book*), Christophe Gans (*Brotherhood of the Wolf*), Lucien Belvaux (*TV's Mère de l'Enfer*), Olivier Assayas (*Summer Hours*) and twice opposite ice-queen extraordinaire Isabelle Huppert.

But it's with the Dardennes that Renier has produced his most affecting, subtle and vivid work. "Oh sure, they have changed me," agrees the 27-year-old. "They're like my fathers or brothers. It's an amazing school for someone to work with the Dardennes. Because, with them, everything is about the actor.

The rehearsal, the preparation, everything is for the actor. The direction we have is always to produce something and find something. It's incredible to do this. We rehearse a lot. Every day, step by step, I build the character. Like this, it becomes very full and very real."

In the years since *The Promise* and *The Child*, Renier has matured into a charismatic leading man — one who teeters between naïve volatility, hard determination and discerning vulnerability. For *The Silence of Lame*, he went the extra mile to add flesh to his supporting character. Or rather, strip it away. "Everything for me, with this character, is to do with the body. So I lost 15 kilos. Starting one month before the movie and throughout shooting, I just didn't eat. A meal for me was just 500 grams of fish and vegetables. All day. And it's so fucking hard. But it's good for the movie, because that's my character."

It's no surprise to learn that Renier's favorite movies show similar physical dedication. ("I like Christian Bale, he's an incredible actor.") And happily, he's eating again now. Particularly Japanese food, his favorite. But when will the Dardennes ring again, if ever? "I don't know," he shrugs. "It's impossible to know. They write very secretly. I hope they will." Either way, Renier's been keeping busy — even popping up for English-language cameos in *Attention* and *In Beguile*.

So the big question for Belgium's rising star is: Dardenne as boring as Martin McDonagh's film makes out? "Sure, just two days is enough. After that, everybody is like, 'Oh my God, this place is shit!'" ■





DEBORAH FRANÇOIS

GIVEN HER BIG BREAK BY THE DARDENNES, DEBORAH FRANÇOIS IS NOW ONE OF EUROPE'S HOTTEST YOUNG STARS

Words by Dave K

Any of the most memorable images from the Dardenne brothers' films are of their female leads. "You can see that they like filming actresses and they film women well," says Deborah François, star of *The Child*, in which she played the put-upon wife of Bruno. Given her appreciation for the way Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne understand their female stars, however, it's intriguing that one of her strongest impressions of the shoot is the way in which they pushed her to deliver a performance that was ultimately nominated for a César and won the Belgian equivalent of an Academy Award. "They didn't work with the boys and the girls in the same way," she says. "I had the impression that they were harder towards the girls than the boys. At the base of it they were perhaps more mafiosi with the boys and with the girls they are very gentle. I never had any experience of them being anything other than real gentlemen but they were very demanding of their actresses."

François dreamed of becoming an actress as a schoolgirl in Liège, but for a long time it looked like something just that: a dream. She took theatre and diction classes for two hours each week but never expected it to amount to anything. After all, how many actors are out of work? "It was a fantasy really," she says. "Something that would only happen in another life."

She saw her breakthrough to her brother, who owns a small newspaper and looking for young women aged between 17 and 19 to act in a film. Respondents were asked to send in their CV with a photograph, and between 150 and 200 entrants were asked to attend an audition. A phone call told François she had won her first starring role, in *The Child*.

In 2005, LWL&S interviewed François for her leading role in *The Pope Turner*, director Denis Dancourt's playful chiller which immediately followed *The Child*. At the time, she

recalled of the brothers' working method: "They say that actors shouldn't construct something around themselves but deconstruct, they try to break down the little cocoon around you."

She acknowledges that, aged only 17 and in her first film role, there was little experience she could bring to the part, but now she thinks more like an actress. "Of course they gave me a script and that was what went onto the screen. They have a precise idea of what they want to film and show, and you have to stay quite close to what they want. In the end, the script is so well written there's nothing you can add."

A French TV adaptation of Dickens' *Dombey and Son* has followed, as well as World War II blockbuster *Female Agents*, alongside Sophie Marceau. "Yes, that was very, very different from *The Child*," she laughs. "But I like things that are different and I had a really good time."

Are there things she learned working with the Dardennes that she has taken to other sets? "Such basic things as punctuality, respecting the people you work with, to be present and ready when you're asked. And precision to be in a given spot at a certain moment as the camera will be the right one. Sometimes actors are quite protected but not with them; you really work."

You can currently catch François, now 21, in family comedy *La premier jour du reste de ta vie*. Awaiting release is her role as a French girl who meets up with a Spanish boy living in a UK squat, *Unvovado Blade*, directed by Argentinian Alexis Dos Santos and shot in London and Nottingham, and a Belgian film, *My Queen Kery*, where she plays the mother of a young girl in 1970s hippy Amsterdam.

Would she be in this position without the Dardennes? "No, so, of course not," she says without hesitation. "Without *The Child* I would never have been an actress." ■

ALAIN MARCOEN

ALAIN MARCOEN SHEDS LIGHT ON LIFE AS THE DARDÈNE BROTHERS' LONG-STANDING DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Words by Mike Kent

Even the anecdotal poverty of world-renowned lowlanders, the city of Liège should step forward and take a bow for its services to Belgian culture. Not only has this Walloon hub of some 187,000 people nurtured the development of the Dardennes; it was also the meeting place for the directors and their now long-term collaborator, director of photography Alain Marcoen.

Having first worked with the brothers on a clutch of documentary projects, as well as their short film *Il court... il court le Monde* in 1967, Marcoen finally got the nod to lens *The Promise* – a tale of one son's impossible choice between familial loyalty and the promise he made to a dying man.

The success of *The Promise* – combined with the three men's mutually formative experiences on set – became the springboard for a relationship that has generated half a dozen films and a healthy hum of international acclaim. Nine years after their breakthrough collaboration, Marcoen recalls the project that invincibly enthralled the trio of two of Belgium's most illustrious cinematic sons with his own. "That shoot was made labourous by the conditions, but remarkable by the brothers' tendency towards the realism of situations, scenery, costumes and the behaviour of the actors," he remembers. "It was a film where the artifice of cinema wasn't apparent, and I hope that the invisibility of the light made some contribution to that."

If Marcoen's lighting of *The Promise* was understated, its success contributed to the growing spotlight which fell as the Dardennes following the film's warm critical reception. But despite receiving many plaques of his own, Marcoen remains resolute in his belief that "the role of a director of photography is to serve the style of the director as well as possible" in an industry famed for inflated egos. "It's refreshing to hear such a fine proponent of his art speak with measured humility of the importance of subordinating his own particular talent to the greater good of the film. "I think that it is inevitably restricting to work with great directors," he reflects simply.

The Dardennes' existing standards may make shooting with them a uniquely demanding process, but – as Marcoen suggests – there is great satisfaction to be had in seeing the film's final cut and understanding "that they were right, that they made the film that they wanted and that you were right to follow them." He adds with what feels like a hint of irony, "In any case, you didn't have the choice."

Marcoen certainly shows no trace of egotism when asked if his preferred shooting style has had an impact on the way the Dardennes envisage and realise their projects. "I don't think I've influenced them," he says. "I modestly dare to believe that my personal concern with realism confirmed them in their tendency towards it, although it was already strong."

There is clearly no danger of Marcoen's own agenda stifling the aesthetic development of his most frequent collaborators. On the contrary; as Marcoen describes it, "their style hasn't stopped evolving: it changes from film to film. The stature and placement of the camera is very different on *Roadside*, *The Son or L'Orme*. Their point of view is never God-like or omniscient. It seems to result from the behaviour of the characters themselves." Indeed, for Marcoen, the directors' insistence on the primacy of their cast is the key to their success as storytellers. "I think that the great lesson of the Dardennes is the importance of the actors, and of the part that they play. It's their faces that we must serve because it is those that tell the story."

Listening to Marcoen's experiences of working with the Dardennes, he would have the ring of a long-standing soldier who has served his country through thick and thin. Yes, there have been hardships and moments of doubt, but if there were sacrifices to be made, they were all for a good cause. So, having long since pledged his allegiance to the brothers, how does he feel about working with other directors? "In each film, whoever the director is, I listen to them with the same attention," he says. "I don't consider the Dardennes method: the absolute rule and the others an exception. But because I've shot with them the most often, they have a greater place in my life." ■

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ARTA DOBROSHI

THE NEW DARLING OF THE DARDENNES IS READY TO BREAK HER SILENCE

*Words by Matt Finkbeiner
Photography by Paul D'Angelo*





the Dobros is a contemporary kind of star. Born in Pristina, capital of Kosovo, she's a survivor of Europe's last twentieth-century war. But look at her now, award-winning actress, muse and symbol of a new, borderless Europe. From nationalism to humanism, her journey is, perhaps, a sign of better things to come.

Her audition for *The Silence of Lorne* is itself an elegant story of the new freedoms and possibilities of a peaceful Europe. "I am from Pristina but at that time I was doing a play in Bosnia and then the casting agent from Paris called me because they saw other movies that I did in Albania," she explains. "He told me, 'They want to film you, can you be in Pristina?' So I went there and the audition lasted for five minutes. I just had to say, 'My name is Arta,' and where I live, I couldn't speak French at all." Two weeks later came another call, inviting her back for a second audition. "I was in Sarajevo, so Jean-Pierre and Luc came and we filmed for one day—that was the first time we met. And after that they told me I could come to Liège to do two more scenes with the other actors, but in French."

If the Dardennes' were scripting this story, it would end with Arta on her knees in some Belgian backstreet, ultimately crushed by life's cruel, implacable opposition. But she worked hard, studying French for eight hours a day, doing homework alone in her hotel, and in a way, her success fits just as neatly with the Dardennes' narrative concerns. They may stir Rosette or Bruno or Lorne of their delusions in the face of harsh reality, but they allow them their hopes and dreams, they celebrate their optimism and self-belief.

For Arta, this nomadic experience was the perfect preparation for tackling the role of Lorne, an Albanian immigrant pimped out to Russian businessmen looking for a green card. "I began from zero because it doesn't really matter that she's from Albania, she could be from anywhere, she could even be Belgian or from America. I said, 'Okay, I'm going to begin from zero—she's a human being, she has this goal, that goal,' and then I put her in the situation, and I see the whole, like her."

It's a hugely demanding role: Arta is onscreen for the entire film, mercilessly deconstructed; left physically and emotionally naked. That meant 18-hour days for five months, but more than that, it meant living in the headspace of her character 24/7. "I wake up and I was in Lorne's life, and it was my life because I chose to live like her," she explains. "I tried to be alone as much as possible. On Saturday and Sunday when I was free, I went only to the pool to swim and that was it. After a scene, if what happened to Lorne was very emotional, it was my body, my emotions. Sometimes I would cry but I tried to stay alone. I spent five months being Lorne."

Before shooting began, there was an additional month-and-a-half for rehearsals, which entailed eight hours a day spent covering the scenes from every conceivable angle. It was in these sessions that Arta got to understand first-hand how the Dardennes brothers work. "The first time that we met, I think we felt like we knew each other before," she says, "so I felt very relaxed and I think they also felt very relaxed. I just love the way they work because that's the way I work—I love doing rehearsals eight hours a day, just to do the scene as well as possible, and they do the same thing." ▼





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Surprisingly, given their vibrant, intimate style, the directors also proved to be willing collaborators. "In one-and-a-half months we rehearsed almost all of the scenes and then, for example, they will say, 'We think you should do it this way', and then they ask your opinion - 'What do you think?' - so they are really very open, and they leave you to do your own research and to give your own possibilities and what you think about the scene," she reveals. That process of refinement would continue right down to the wire: "Just one hour before shooting we talked and sometimes changed it completely and sometimes it stayed the same."

Seeing what Deborah Propp has to say about her experiences with the brothers, you could be forgiven for thinking that the Dardennes are modest businessmen, but Arts disagrees. Despite the rigorous preparation process, "We had fun during the shooting because they are very agreeable, nice and friendly," she says. "Plus, the whole crew are like a family: they've worked together for 10 or 12 years - You feel like you are at home. They give you this confidence, and I had confidence in them 100 per cent. I love them because when you don't doubt, then you don't think - you just do it."

As for her own future, it's fitting that Arts won't be placing artificial barriers in the way of her career. "I want to do everything," she says. "When I started acting I did theatre and film. I didn't have time to divide them, and when I got a project I read it completely, and if the screenplay hit me I liked it. It's not that I said, 'Now I want this kind of movie.' It doesn't mean that I would love to do a commercial movie or Hollywood movie or an art scene movie - if the story is good, it doesn't mean that it's commercial, if the story is good it is worth doing 100 per cent."

But couldn't she cash in now that she has played it from Cannes under her belt, and a famous directing duo on her CV? "It doesn't matter if you're paid more or less, or if you work with big directors or small ones," she insists. "Now what I have in mind is to work as much as possible and to choose different projects. Because I think the world is very small and we are all citizens of this world. I cannot be stuck in one place." Lorne would certainly agree. ■

Check out www.bbc.com/culture for more exclusive images of Arts and to see full transcripts of all these interviews.

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A VISUAL ACCOUNT OF FIVE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT, UNRECOGNISED FILMMAKERS



Once a decade, the BFI's *Sight & Sound* polls critics across the globe to gather the definitive list of the world's 10 best films. The idea, they say, is to determine "which films stand the test of time in the face of shifting critical opinions."

And yet, the list isn't half as instructive for what's on it (*Citizen Kane*, *The Godfather*, *Vertigo* – you can probably guess the rest) as for what isn't. Because although it responds to temporary shifts in trends and perspectives, it struggles to react to the more deep-rooted assumptions, prejudices and cultural roadblocks that will keep some films, and some filmmakers, forever absent.

The very idea of a cinematic canon raises questions that strike at the heart of the film industry. The basic assumption is that the films made available to us, whether on theatrical release or DVD, represent the very best that cinema has to offer. But as critics like Jonathan Rosenbaum and Mark Cousins have argued, the studios and distributors, the promotional machine and its compliant champions, have often conspired to keep great cinema out of reach. A whole spectrum of cinema – films that don't reflect the right kind

of aesthetic, political or commercial world view – has been struck from the record like an unfixed leaky in *Sideways* Poodle.

Then in its entirety, the *Sight & Sound* list (comfortably over 500 films) does a better job than some of its rivals (Rosenbaum denounced the American Film Institute Top 100 as a "route commercial play dreamed up by a consortium of marketers to repackaged familiar goods"), but the result is still an exercise in hypocrisy. While pretending to open our eyes to new experiences, the enshrining of the Top 10 (buckling to the needs of market forces) simply serves to reinforce our intellectual incognito.

In tribute, then, to the forgotten faces of cinema, we've put together an alternative perspective. Think of this as a brief introduction to an idea that will be expanded online and in the magazine in a regular slot on *Cult Heroes and Classic Cinema* from issue 21. In addition, the portraits of these directors were commissioned from a number of London's street artists, the scrapers and hustlers from the dreams of the *Cordeliers* – the overlooked underclass of their world ■

To add your own voice to the discussion, visit www.littlewhitefilms.co.uk.

HILL DOUGLAS

By Ferdinand Ruess

You may have spotted the DVD of the *Hill Douglas Trilogy* – *My Childhood* (1972), *My Ain Folk* (1973) and *My Way Home* (1976) – on the shelves recently and wondered why the name doesn't ring a bell. Born in Edinburgh in 1934 and creator of a modest, though coherent, cinematic oeuvre (four features and four shorts), Douglas is one of this isle's great filmmakers. A pioneer of British neorealism, his movies are stark and austere works which focus – autobiographically – on the nature of poverty and how it is perceived by those experiencing it, and those investigating it.





DJIBRIL DIOF MAMBEY

By Brian Fordess

In 1973, a filmmaker emerged who had the potential to change the shape of cinema. It wasn't Wilson Fredkin, Martin Scorsese or even George Lucas, although *The Exorcist*, *Mean Streets* and *American Graffiti* all debuted that year. It was Djibril Diop Mambéty, whose *Touki Bouki*—a frenetic, dissonant, New Wave-inspired fantasy about a couple who dream of escaping Africa—was arguably the most formally daring film of the decade. The fact that the Senegalese director is still largely unknown says a lot about the preoccupations and prejudices of critics and audiences alike.

AGNÈS VARDA

By Peter Dinklage

New Wave pioneer Agnès Varda never attained the godlike status accorded the *Gilmer* boys' club, but it's a mark of her importance that they were always her biggest fans. Alain Resnais edited *Le Pointe-Courte* (1994), Jean-Luc Godard took a cameo role in her love letter to Paris, *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962), and Chris Marker appears as an animated cat in *Les Plages d'Après* (2000), a dreamlike autobiography told in beaches and films. *Les Plages* is a typically modest treasure-chest of clips from her 60-year career: docs like the legendary *Black Panthers* (1968), and features with brilliant, feminist roles for Jane Birkin and Sandrine Bonnaire. Given her genius for collecting and connecting, Varda's viewers will hopefully continue to swell.

London 15.10.08
Peter
D





ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

By David Karger

One of the most complex and intriguing Hollywood filmmakers ever, Taliesin-born (but American-bred), Rouben Mamoulian's directorial career ended prematurely after he was fired from both *Porgy and Bess* (1935) and *Cheopatra* (1936). In truth, Mamoulian's cinematic intelligence was just too agile and too loaded for the mainstream. His stylistic innovations—mobile camera (*Appassionata*, 1929), voiceover (*City Streets*, 1931), zoom lens (*Love Me Tonight*, 1932), three-strip Technicolor (*Black Swan*, 1935)—were washed with a strain of dark sexuality and political change that crackled thrillingly just beneath the surface of apparently melodramatic fare like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1927). He was the outsider on the inside, blazing a trail that the likes of Sam Raimi and Christopher Nolan are following today.

CHARLES BURNETT

by David Laddie

Routinely described as the 'greatest American filmmaker you've never heard of', Charles Burnett is looking back into fashion. He has pioneered a resolutely independent path since his student film, *The Killer of Sheep* (1977), introduced black consciousness into American film. Through many years of enforced inactivity, Burnett never lost that touch of genius. It shined in the evocation of family and history in *To Sleep With Anger* (1990), and again in the mid-western of television – on the Disney Channel no less – who commissioned Burnett to make a family drama set in a southern plantation, and ended up with *Nightjohn* (1998), one of the most moving portrayals of enslavement ever committed to film.

Amel S
London 15/10/08





Despite the wars, the bickering and the endless infighting, Europe has always maintained a veneer of stability. Not any more. Consensus politics is fleeing the event-driven Dutch; the Per Fight is on the rise; and Russia's bullyboys are back. But for the ultimate evidence that the end is nigh, you just have to look at Belgium.

Yes, Belgium. Because if things are going down the toilet in Europe's most reliably seppurito state, then the rest of us are definitely fucked.

Quick history lesson: since it was created in the nineteenth century as a buffer between France and Holland, Belgium has been divided between Dutch-speaking Flanders in the north, and French-speaking Wallonia in the south. Disputes ensued – though Dutch was made the official language in 1966, French remained the preferred tongue of the aristocratic classes who maintained that links to France were the root of the country's cultural identity. Throw in a long-standing economic grudge from the poorer north against the richer south (which in recent years has been reversed), and you've got all the ingredients for major unrest. It all spilled over

in 2007 when, amid calls from both north and south for partition, Belgium spent over 100 days without a central government, while the putative prime minister described his country as no more than 'an accident of history'. So... not good.

If Belgium is in crisis, it's one that is reflected in the country's cinema. Not simply, there is no 'Belgian cinema', and there never has been. In Ernest Meisje's *The Dream of the Low Countries*, veteran Flemish director Harry Kümel broods the schism between Walloon and Flemish filmmaking to 1984, to the funding and subsidy infrastructure put in place by Flemish Minister of Culture Fernest van Elslande, who saw 'indigenous' cinema as 'a means to initiate the federalisation of the country.' The, says Kümel, "was aimed at driving a wedge between our two cultures, and with hindsight, succeeded in its purpose."

As Meisje climbs today, "Film funding – and culture – in Belgium really took off in the late 1980s, at a time when the country also found itself in an accelerated evolution towards two 'cultural communities'. From that political schism, sadly, film seems to have suffered the full-on of regionalist moves to protect

WHY BELGIAN CINEMA IS AS DIVIDED AS THE COUNTRY'S FRACTIOUS POLITICS.

Split

local literature, theatre and folk art; it's a split that was mourned by many revered filmmakers such as Henri Storck and André Delvaux, but since those people died it almost appears a natural one to newer generations."

Those newer generations find themselves working in distinct genres "too far apart to compare", as Kumei puts it: Wallonian cinema, whose most famous contemporary sons are the Dardenne brothers, graduated from Belgium's documentary tradition, developing a style of social realism that gropes towards an uneasy cultural identity built on solidly left-wing credentials. In Flanders, home to the likes of Koen Mortier (*Ex Drummer*) and blockbuster director Erik van Looy (*Memory of a Killer*), genre cinema, heavily influenced by Hollywood, has taken root.

Van Looy, whose heroes are Michael Mear and Brian de Palma, is Belgium's most commercially successful filmmaker. Where the Dardenne brothers are lucky to get 150,000 turns on seats, *Memory of a Killer* had over one million admissions in Flanders alone. His latest thriller, *Loft*, a *Usual Suspects*-style potboiler, has just been picked up for international distribution.

And yet he has much to complain about when it comes to the reception of Flemish film beyond its borders. "For the French language movies, their path is sometimes a little easier," he gripes. "I get the feeling that they get easier access to the French festivals, most importantly Cannes, and because of the language they're also co-produced by France. With our movies being in Flemish, which is the same as Dutch, we have Holland, but Holland is not the same as France - it's much smaller and it's not the same backing."

But the very smallness of its core constituency has, paradoxically, allowed Flemish cinema to establish itself as a dominant voice within Belgium. "The strange thing about Flemish film is that it's really concentrated towards its own public," says Koen Mortier, whose stylish, black-comic drama, *Ex Drummer*, received a relatively wide European release precisely by flying in the face of that stereotype. "It's like Bollywood in a way. You want to hook your own public on the film, which means because there are only five million people [in Flanders] you have to have a lot of people out of this five million to get your money back, so you try to please them." ■

Words by Adam Baskerville

Screen

Twenty years ago Flemish movies were like a Jehovah's Witness that calls at your house at 8am on a Sunday.

In contrast to Wallonia, where the *Dontennois* sombre social realism sacrifices commercial success for critical acclaim, Flemish filmmakers have self-consciously addressed the demands of their audience, an audience which, as Matthijs describes it, "accepts Hollywood cinema as the benchmark of 'true' cinema." Or as vet Looy puts it, "Twenty years ago Flemish movies were something that Flemish audiences really didn't want to go and see. It was like a Jehovah's Witness that calls at your house at 8am on a Sunday – they had this reflex like, 'Get out, we don't want to see you!' That's gone now, and that has to do with the fact that they're looking different genres." And he, for one, is happy to give them what they want: "Of course you have to deliver quality work, but when I make a movie I try to make a movie that I like and that the audience will like too. It's not about being hungry for applause, it's just that making movies is so hard, such a stressful job, that I don't want to do it for just myself and a couple of friends. I want to make sure that this hard work gets enjoyed by as many people as possible."

The extent to which a new nationalism is fueling these opposite cinematic identities is open to question, but the fact remains that Flemish audiences are largely unresponsive to French-language cinema, and the reverse is true in Wallonia. "I like Belgium very much, and although politically there are more and more voices saying the country should split and I'm totally against it, I have to admit that there's really a big cultural wall between the two parts," says van Looy. "It's very difficult to get access to the French-speaking audience and vice-versa." But

he's quick to add: "The nationalistic reflex has been going on for the last two or three years, but French movies have not been so popular for about 10 or 15 years." Mathejs agrees: "What I would urge everyone to bear in mind is the historical trajectory of Belgian cinema. Any 'nationalist' or 'protectionist' measures are snapshots in that history, and not the defining factors of that history," he argues.

It may be instructive to see the schism in Belgian cinema as ideological rather than political. Compare it to Germany, for example, where the singular voice of New German Cinema has since split into two schools: Berlin in the north, and Munich in the south. From Munich, the Constantin Film Company makes commercial ventures aimed at an international audience with directors who openly dream of heading to Hollywood (think Oliver Hirschbiegel and Stefan Ruzowitzky). In Berlin, by contrast, filmmakers like Detlev Buck and Christian Petzold continue to make distinct, intimate dramas about the evolving identity of their country. Petzold once disarmingly described Adolf Hitler as "Germany's Elvis Presley," so frustrating was he with the way the Nazi leader had been commodified by internationally focused German cinema.

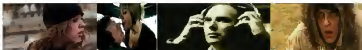
In this light, not only do the divisions in Belgian cinema seem less threatening, they make sense in the tense, internal narrative of a country that has always struggled to achieve self-realisation. There may not be unity, exactly, but there is perhaps a kind of harmony. ■

Read more at www.bbc.com/culture/2014/04/140416_belgium_cinema or *Scrapbook of The Cinema of the Low Countries*, published by Wallpress Press.

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Belgium Beats

Words by Omer Ali
Illustration By Paul Willoughby



FOR BELGIAN BAND HOOVERPHONIC, IT'S BEEN A STRANGE TRIP FROM
FILM SCHOOL TO SOUNDTRACK WORK FOR THE LIKES OF BERNARDO
BERTOLUCCI. SONGWRITER ALEX CALLIER RELIVES THE RIDE



It's not every band that has one of their songs featured on the soundtrack of a Bernardo Bertolucci film before they've even recorded their first album. "It was quite surreal, to be honest," says Alex Callier, singer/guitar and member of Belgium's Hooverphonic, whose single "ZWicky" was picked for use in *Stealing Beauty*. "First of all we're Belgians, and the typical thing about Belgians is that we're quiet, down-to-earth."

Seeing Bertolucci's 1996 piece as U2's Tyler's youthful beauty was odd, too. "If you hear a song of your own in a film it's almost as if it doesn't fit in because it's so close to the bone, like it's really a part of you and it's in someone else's work. On the one hand, I thought it was very cool and I was very proud, and at the same time it was kind of weird."

Known as 'Hoover' at the start – they changed their name to avoid conflict with the brand and other groups of the same name – the band was heavily influenced by Britpop's early '90s trip-hop scene. "ZWicky," about the hate partners can inflict on each other in a relationship, is a prime example of Hooverphonic's aptitude of samples (in this case Basic House's version of Bart Berman's "Walk On By") to ground the atmosphere of a song, and come up with something quite different from the original.

The song's inclusion on the soundtrack of *Stealing Beauty* ensured college radio airtime for the group, and a healthy following in the US, as well as much of continental Europe, something that has never quite been replicated in the UK for reasons you can only ponder. Callier doesn't even own that version of "ZWicky" as he gave his copy of the soundtrack album away and never got it back; the band recorded a different version for the first album, *A New Shizophrenic Sound Spectacular*. "It's hard to look on the internet to see if I can still find that soundtrack because it's quite strange not to have it in my possession," he says.

The new (album) version of "ZWicky" was featured in teen horror flick *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, while the film's follow-up, *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer*, picked up on one of Hooverphonic's last singles, the poignant "Elen", from the band's second album, *Blue Mander Power Mix*. Other film and TV credits

have followed (including a few more outings for "ZWicky"), and plenty of their songs have been used in adverts, selling everything from mobile phones to Volkswagen Beetles.

After various comings and goings over the years, the band has settled on a trio of Callier, guitarist Raymond Goerts and singer Geike Arnaert. Their music tends towards the atmospheric, string-laden, verging on the epic and, of course, cinematic. The reason for this has its roots in Callier's own, odd route to becoming a pop star, via film school. "I didn't go to film school for the film part," he says of his time at the FITS, Brussels. "I wanted to become a sound engineer. But in Belgium you don't have a sound engineer degree, definitely not at that time, around 1990. So the only thing you could do was go to film school and then you had everything: sound engineering, film editing..."

"I always loved movies so that was already there, but in film school I really got interested in all the other aspects of movies, and one professor made me change my ideas about music. He got me into the whole aspect of creating atmosphere, not only using musical instruments all the time but you can use whatever – doors and breath, all kinds of noises – to create music. At that point I got the idea: why shouldn't we combine that with pop music and, if you did, what would it sound like? That's how Hooverphonic started, it was like one big experiment."

In 1998, Hooverphonic provided the soundtrack for an off-kilter Belgian thriller called *Shedra*, starring Mickey Rourke. Callier found the diligent working process difficult at first. "When I write music it always has a filmic aspect, it always sounds already like a soundtrack but it's a mood I'm in and I translate that mood into my songs," he explains. "In this case, you have boundaries, you have to watch images and match an emotion that the director wants to express and try to make that even stronger. You're working for somebody, which you never do as a pop artist, and you're obviously working in a team. I enjoyed that, because it's so different."

Callier is exceptionally knowledgeable about movie soundtracks and, in 2003, a suite of Hooverphonic's best-known songs was presented at the Ghent Film Festival. The influence of certain film ▼

composers is obvious but, when asked about his favourites, many are choices of the true aficionado. "First of all there's John Barry – all the stuff he did for James Bond was amazing. The connection I have with him is that he loves using major seven chords and also he is very fond of chromatic scales, but it's definitely an inspiration."

"I'm a big Tim Burton fan, so if you like Tim Burton then Danny Elfman. I still think the best soundtrack he wrote was *Edward Scissorhands*, that's fantastic. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was amazing as well. I really like Thomas Newman. What can be particularly interesting about movie soundtracks is that sometimes you can really think that a soundtrack can be fantastic and the film can be shit. I don't like *Meet Joe Black* like movie that much but there's a couple of beautiful places on the soundtrack that I adore. I also look to Philip Glass. *The Mount*, *The Illusionist*."

Perhaps the most cinematic of all Hooverphone's albums is their fourth, 2002's *Hooverphone's Presents Jackie Cane*, a bizarre concept album based on a song Calver wrote with pop wizard Cathy Dennis after the two were paired up at a songwriting seminar in England. "The album was a lot of fun and for some people it was difficult to follow because it goes from extremely pop to really dark, from very intimate to big and large," Calver says. "I wanted to go over the top with that album, it was like it was inspired by some old musical. For a long time we thought about creating it as a musical or a film but, then again, it takes such a lot of time."

In case you're wondering, the character Jackie Cane goes to music school but she starts drinking too much and takes too many drugs. Her twin sister, who is a cook, makes her dinner and poisons her. "It's quite a clichéd story but the clichés are there because mostly they're true. It's a very tragic story," Calver describes.

The band's ambitions haven't stopped there: a fifth studio album, *More Sweet Music*, in 2005, came as two discs, featuring two dramatically different mixes of the same 18 songs. Their very highly recommended latest album – and a good entry point for the band's music – was recorded live in the studio, as a six-piece, held together by Gaila Ansell's exceptional pop voice. Its title, *The President of the LSD Golf Club*, was apparently inspired by

a taxi driver Calver encountered in San Francisco, who reminisced about the '60s. "Every Tuesday we took loads of acid and then we went to play golf."

Big albums, using a 41-piece string section, tend to be followed by something more intimate for Hooverphone. "I like the contrast," Calver says. "It's difficult for people to follow sometimes but I enjoy it. Sometimes I like to wear completely black and other days I wear all sorts of colours." The *President of the LSD Golf Club* was recorded using '60s instruments, including Mellotron and Farfisa organs. Calver is happy to embrace new technologies as well as the old. "I like to call myself a retro-futurist," he says.

A series of festival appearances this summer has just culminated, when we speak, in an outdoor gig in Hooverphone's hometown, Sint-Niklaas, 30,000 fans packed into what is Belgium's biggest market square, according to Calver. Next up is a bit of home improvement for him. "At this point I'm redoing our attic, we're making it into a home cinema with high-definition projection and a big surround system. I'm really looking forward to checking out our music in that new room in a couple of weeks."

When Calver talks about his music, the word that comes up most often is "vibe". This preoccupation seems to have started when, in his first job after university, he had enough money to buy a sampler and a computer. "I was living in a shitty apartment and I didn't have any money but I had a sampler and a computer, and that's how I got into trying to create a vibe."

"That's the point with Hooverphone: we always try to create a vibe first, but then – very important – there are a lot of bands who do that as well, but tend to forget to write a song, and that's something I don't forget. Through the years we evolved from the first records being more soundscapes to the last records being more like classical movie scores, but the film thing was always the red thread through our work, so even if we made bombastic albums or we made more intimate albums, they always have a vibe and an atmosphere." ■

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Gutter

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A CMLin review will not be evaluated by any perceived rules. Just as movies are about more than the two hours you spend sitting in the cinema, our reviews are a chance to talk about much more than the immediate experience of the film in question. There are many different aspects of the movie-going experience and we will embrace them all.

Anticipation

Have we said six months for a new office bygone world? Back a book that you loved and currently without the adaptation from pleasantly surprised by an off-the-movie, is dependent? Having some plays a central role in your reviews to a movie, rather than against it, we think it should be mentioned and not included as part of the movie-going experience.

Marked out of 5

Enjoyment

All other things aside, how did you feel for these two hours? Were you glad to your seat? Did the film speak to your soul? Was it inspiring, disappointing, or just plain boring? Were you even awake?

Marked out of 5

In Retrospect

Great movies live with you; you carry them around wherever you go and the things they say shape the way you see the world. Did this movie take every or any every moment burned into your soul? Was it a crash for you or a kick, good for a rainy Sunday afternoon? On the first day of the rest of your life? Did you leave it with a fairy only to fall in love with a just not? Or did that first love dream every like a damned romance?

Marked out of 5

CHAPTER FOUR

In which we review
the latest film releases



CHANGELING

DIRECTED BY Clint Eastwood
STARRING Angelina Jolie,
Clint Eastwood, Jeff Bridges

CASTING BY
Lynne Krawcheck

Kidnap, murder,

madness, corruption and another missing child: the true story of '20s single mom Christine Collins is so good/shocking that if it hadn't actually happened, some smart screenwriter might well have dreamed it anyway.

Christine's ordinary neighbourhood life is shattered when her 10-year-old son Walter (Gustin Griffith) suddenly vanishes from the house. Five months pass. The police inform Christine that they've found Walter. The media gather, flash-bulbs popping, and the boy steps off the train to be reunited with his mother. Except Christine knows that this is not her son.

Bollywood unfolds this mating setup with real resonance, with DoP Tom Stern faultlessly recreating period LA with composed beauty, and

Angelina Jolie heating up a superb lead performance. But from here, as *Changeling* starts spreading into deeper, darker territory, the drama starts to thin out and clichés grow like mould on old bread.

Refusing to accept Christine's claims despite overwhelming physical evidence, the police chief throws her in the psychiatric ward. Enter John Malkovich as a QUITE SHOUTY radio-evangelical crusader who goes on a mission to expose the corrupt LAPD, save Christine, find her kid and uncover the horrific truth at the heart of *Changeling's* mystery: the infamous "Winnetka Chicken Murders".

Despite Jolie's powerfully committed performance, despite the scope and subtlety of *Babylon 5* creator J. Michael Straczynski's screenplay, Clint just can't help

filling up his swelling score like an emotional cue-card, or heaving the camera on Jolie's aching face just a few seconds too long each time.

Don't get us wrong: it's a perfectly watchable mystery-drama. But it could and should have been more gripping and that evokes into a damning indictment of corruption and bureaucracy in late '20s LA (read: America in general). Instead, it's been sandbagged by glossy clichés at every turn and populated by characters instead of people. If might have been an LA story to sit with *Chinatown* or *LA Confidential*. Instead, it's been pulped into pure Hollywood product. It's the kind of movie Ron Howard would have made. And, oh look! There's Howard and Brian Grazer in the credits as producers.

Along with terrific support performances (look out for Gena Rowlands' Amy Ryer), Jolie's powerfully committed central turn anchors the movie. But even she can't beat the teeth-grinding final scene. "I do have one thing," glows Christine, bravely. "What's that?" asks the generic cop. "Hope," she smiles, before walking away across the street as the camera pans high above her. Todd Jastrow/Grazer.

Anticipation: *Changeling* director *Angels in the Flesh* is a true-life murder mystery. **Fun**

Enjoyment: **B+** All very nice. But why are we feeling nothing? **True**

In Retrospect: Too glossy, too clichéd, too bad. **True**



RELIGULOUS

THEY'VE
GIVEN UP
ON THE
BIBLE

Clay and Maher are self-loathing Catholics-turned-atheists who are here to give us a taste of what it's like to be a religious person in a world where everyone is a skeptic.

In a spirit of humanity and tolerance, we sent an atheist and a Christian to see *Religulous* in the hope that they'd have a fight...

10: Okay, so I'm a self-loathing Catholic-turned-atheist. And you are...

20: A happy-cleppy, born-again Christian who graduated last year with an honours degree in philosophy and theology.

10: What was your gut reaction to the film as a piece of propaganda? Bill Maher, quite rightly, doesn't respect your religion. How did you feel about that?

20: It was much more thought-provoking than I was expecting, but his blatant bias made me feel that he was no less a fundamentalist than the religious

people he was criticising. I wasn't offended by the film, though parts of it made me feel uncomfortable, as it does when your faith's dirty laundry is aired in public – like with the health and wealth preacher it would definitely offend a Muslim, a Mormon, a Scientologist and all those other cultish religions. And any unthinking, narrow-minded Christian.

10: One of the more objective things that the film had to say was that there's nothing original about Christianity. If it wasn't for the fact that a Roman emperor made it an official religion, today we'd mention it in the same breath as any other marginal death cult from the early stages of man's intellectual development.

20: I didn't really feel like he succeeded in making that point.

He emphasised Jesus being born on December 25, but most Christians know that wasn't when he was born, it was when the Roman Church decided to celebrate his birthday because it fitted in with their festivals. Secondly, it wasn't a 'marginal death cult'. The whole reason Christianity was adopted as the official Roman faith was because it became the dominant religion in Roman cities.

10: I've always wanted to ask a proper atheist why is it that you can pick and choose which parts of the Bible you believe in? How can it be the revealed word of God, but you don't buy the talking snake? Why don't you live your life according to the various crazy statements about biblical law? Picking and choosing is just a

dishonest intellectual sleight of hand, isn't it?

20: Christians believe that the Bible is both a human and divine book. We do not believe, like the Jews or Muslims, that the Bible was dictated to people by God. Thus Christians do not take everything as word-for-word literal, which would be ridiculous. There are many different genres in the Bible, you don't read them all in the same way. Poets need to be interpreted in a different way to history, etc. That's not dishonest, it's common sense.

10: Correct.

20: AAJ

10: GJ3

See www.BibleReligulous.co.uk for the full satirical war of words.



PATTI SMITH: DREAM OF LIFE

SMITH TALKS BY
Steven Sebring
FOOTAGE BY
Richard Linklater

PHOTOGRAPH
by Jeffery M. Levene

Patti Smith and

Steven Sebring have put 11 years of effort into this artistic interpretation of Smith's own rock biopic. *Dream of Life*. It's awesomely non-linear and poetic in spirit. It's also impossibly dull.

Defined by her brave, unorthodox femininity, masterful wit with words and inner-hic approach to politics, Smith is a modern American legend. And the indie-haired one doesn't just let anyone film her non-stop for over a decade, so the footage here is, firstly, a rarity and, secondly, of huge interest to her committed fans. It's quite a coup for first-time feature director Sebring.

It starts promisingly—in grainy black-and-white on a train. Patti narrates her birth, childhood, marriage to Fred

'Sonny' Smith and the fall-out from his early death, which was rapidly followed by her brother's. Sebring has his subject set up why this movie matters: following as it does years of self-imposed exile from the media glare and her significant coming out on the other side as a single mother and middle-aged agit-punk.

So, we think, at least an insight into this heroine is on the cards, hand to the stringers (Ginsberg, Burroughs), stars (Dylan, Shree) and spiritual descendant of Rimbaud and Blake. But what we get is nostalgia and name-dropping (the precise date at which Dylan turned the guitar she admires she can't play) and a director too besotted with Smith to enter the editing suite.

Live footage of crowd-

pleases like 'Land' and 'Guns' provides a welcome chance to see Smith at her best: as do shots of her moving conditions of poems or simply being psyched at an anti-Arsona political rally. But when we're asked to follow her around the globe to watch her pose by poets' gravestones, the homage goes too far. Even a scene where she returns to her family to eat hamburgers—given added poignancy as her parents have since deceased—is flatly humourless.

It's awful to think fashion photographer Sebring spent 11 years behind his films. Bolas to produce this. After the first four years, he mailed out his credit card to the tune of \$100,000. Not one to give up, he scaled down his ambitions

and, aiming to get to the heart of Patti as a person and not just a rock star, filmed her sitting in the corner of her bedroom, with only her most important belongings as side-references.

And yet, unless you like endlessly reminiscing about Walt Whitman and William Blake and blah and blah there's really nothing to see here, folks. **George Harris**

Anticipation...

...member of Punk Weekly knows her work. **Flav**

Enjoyment... Jesus died for somebody's sins this time too was one of them. **Ben**

In Retrospect... Eleven years speak on all that's Really? **One**



THE MAN FROM LONDON

WRITTEN BY ANDREW
THE KING (MUSIC BY
TOM JARVIS, RD. TULLIAN)

OPENING
SEQUENCE

'Unforgiving' is the word that instantly springs to mind when considering the latest work from Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr – a brutalist noir nightmare loosely based on a novel by Belgian crime writer Georges Simenon.

The minutely choreographed opening chapter lethargically unfolds in a single shot as grizzled, introspective lighthouse keeper Maloin (Miroslav Krobot) witnesses a series of criminal episodes on the dockside beneath him, resulting in a man being thrown into the sea and a suitcase full of baronets left for him to procure.

The remainder of the film is made up of similar gliding, prolonged tracking shots, as our 'baron' wrestles with his conscience to a discomfiting background cacophony of ticking hammers and an infinitely

repeated squarebox refrain.

Those who have sought (and enjoyed) Tarr's metaphysical denser movie *Werckmeister Harmonies* or his seven-hour communist allegory *Sátántangó* should be able to sink into and digest the new film with relative ease. But it's still a film that demands a colossal amount of patience and contemplation. Alan Mack

Anticipation: One of Europe's most extraordinary filmmaking talents. *Four*

Enjoyment: A tough, tough, tough, tough watch and then some. *Three*

In Retrospect: It's a shocker, for better and for worse. *Three*

Take a waltz on the wild side with Art Director extraordinaire, David Polonsky.

LM: Like: An animated documentary, that's a pretty novel concept. How did *Waltz With Bashir* come about?

Polonsky: I worked with Ari Folman on a TV documentary series which had short bits of animation in each episode. That's when Ari realized animation could be a tool for documentary storytelling. For a long time he wanted to deal with his experiences of the war in Lebanon. He mentioned he found what he was looking for – a fresh way of dealing with an old issue.

LM: Like: Ari has described making this film as a form of 'therapy'. Interpreting his memories and putting them on screen, did you feel like his therapist?

Polonsky: The fact that he was able to tell his story, even in writing, I guess was therapeutic in itself for him. And for us, dealing with the visualisation of the story, it was like dealing with any other story. Actually I think the hardest part was the script, and the fact that the film existed on a regular talking-heads documentary before we animated it.

LM: Like: The film has a very clean, pronounced style. How did you decide on that visual identity?

Polonsky: It was either that style had to be quite essential in terms of the character design, we couldn't exaggerate too much, and we couldn't make ourselves too precise – the sharp was the most important thing. We were depicting places that were supposed to be real, but we were dealing with memory. To create the key memory works, I came up with a way of using photographs in a deceptive way. I took photographs from the internet and drew over them and between them. You're not sure if it's a photograph or drawing, you're never sure what's real and what's not in made up.

LM: Like: But there is some video footage?

Polonsky: We knew that if had to be there to make sure people don't come out forgetting we're dealing with a real event. Making those pretty pictures of horrific things takes out a little bit of the stress – we had to make sure that there was for real, that it really happened.

LM: Like: The film deals with emotions that are raw and horrific. How difficult is it to capture that through a medium as meticulous as animation?

Polonsky: You really are steeped over this thing, and you're very close to it. You're not thinking about the medium and the final effect, it's only how you when you see what you've done on the end. One thing that kind of helped our studio was the second Lebanon war. You realize that what you're doing is not actually a work of art, you're dealing with things that have a direct influence on your life, and it's a bit scary. *City Limits*



WALTZ
WITH
BASHIR

THE BASHIR
DOCUMENTARY

WALTZ WITH BASHIR
THE BASHIR DOCUMENTARY
THE BASHIR DOCUMENTARY

Ten minutes into Ari
Folman's *Waltz With Bashir*, it's easy to see why this animated documentary was the talk of this year's Cannes Film Festival.

There's simply never been a film quite like it, its clean, almost retrofitted lines evoking a tale of brutal horror as Folman takes us on a journey into the dark heart of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in the 1980s. And yet, though rooted in the past, as *Bashir* reveals a country struggling to come to terms with the psychic damage wrought by war in the Middle East, it could scarcely be more relevant today.

On June 6, 1982, the Israeli Defense Forces advanced into southern Lebanon, wading into a civil war that had been ignited by religious differences and fueled by one atrocity after

another. But for all that its images of violence are harrowing and direct, *Bashir* isn't a film about war per se—it's an exploration of the permanent marks that violence can leave, not just on the body of the victims, but on the minds of the victors.

Folman, who was only a teenager when he went to war, was provoked by the nightmare of a friend. He realized that he, too, had a recurring, cryptic dream related to his experience, the meaning of which was locked somewhere inside his subconscious, along with his memories. His journey into his own psyche takes us back into the folds of history, ending at the gates of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut, and the shattering horror that took place there.

But there are other, more curious memories in the mix. While the aversive hedonism and black humor of the soldiers' recit Apocryphal tales, their fragile, half-naked bodies and empty eyes are also strikingly reminiscent of other animated Jews at Auschwitz and Belsen—the horrific history of the fathers that somehow gave way to the sins of their sons.

Waltz With Bashir isn't about politics or blame, however. It's about the dehumanizing far of hate. As such, it's an urgent, compelling film that isn't sidetracked by the tired dichotomies of the region. Credit, too, to David Polonsky's art direction and Max Richter's funeral score, which hangs over the film like a veil. This is grown-up filmmaking that

demands and deserves grown-up engagement from its public. Let's hope it gets it because this is utterly essential viewing. *Met Bochner*

Anticipation.
Excitement, word of mouth and a daring premise. *Four*

Enjoyment. The film's great achievement is to be overwhelming without ever becoming manipulative. *Four*

In Retrospect.
Genuinely outstanding. Could be a landmark film. *Five*

See www.filmcritic.com or www.filmcritic.com for details of a special members event with David Polonsky at the ICA.

JULIA

[illegible]

Meet Julius, an

stalemate ginger gruffs in a
flimsy dress and cheap bling,
recompanied by a cloud of smoke
that drifts alongside her. She's
so cold, pale and unblinking as
a porcelain doll. And, like the
doll, is easily smashed. She can't
be smudged with her AA meetings,
shags anyone who'll look her
way and has no one for company
but the bag between her slony
breasts. She's quite odd.

But one day, after being plucked out of the gutter by Elena, her neighbour and fellow AA member, Julia finds herself roped into a complex kidnapping that

needless to say, doesn't quite go to plan. Tempted by the overpowering allure of \$20,000 (that's a lot of vodka) Julie decides to help the desperate Gene take her child back from his rich grandfather.

Swanson pulls out a nifty bag of tricks in a performance that sees her become the Sim. Her extraordinary facial expressions, emotional volume and remarkable ability to judge each on-screen interaction with perfect precision make it impossible not to be sucked in. (She has proven in the past that her talents run deep, but this time all the world is truly her

A woman with red hair and a blue mask, looking surprised with her hand raised.

Antileptosis.

Alcohol: makes you
sweat with rich kid
dreams of sex. Put

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Scott A. Holt, James Hogg

三、 熱帯性の植物の分布

Plot glitches don't matter - Swinton makes the film. **Four**

SCAR 3D

[illegible]

Nowadays, it seems

like there's as much torture porn as cinema as there is regular porn on the internet. How to stand out in a crowd? *Spear 3D* arrives with a very liberal answer: The producers can boast that this is the first live-action movie to utilise the same high-def 3D technology that James Cameron is using on his upcoming sci-fi groundbreaker *Avatar*. But have they made the best of it?

As a child, Joan Barrows (Angela Bettis) was tortured by a serial killer. Sixteen years later, she returns to her home town to find a copkiller killer doing the same thing to her niece Olympia (Katie Ross). Friends and all of Olympia's friends join her attempts to stop the new series of killings, as interspersed with flashbacks to her own experience, so the audience gets twice the sodium for their cent.

The plot is predictable: the acting terrible, the dialogue awful, the gore unimaginative and there's none of the irony or psychology that the likes of *Blaw* or *W22* can conceivably claim. However, pulling aside pesky questions about the actual filmmaking, does the technology work?

Judging by *Star 3D*, high-end 3D is very similar to standard 3D – but without the red-and-green lenses. With the glasses off, the film looks like two identical images, one superimposed over the other, only slightly out of phase horizontally. Putting the glasses on creates a single image with added depth, which works well when geometric objects like buildings are placed at an oblique angle to the camera, but not so well when objects are placed perpendicular, which makes it a bit like watching an old 3D videotape. There's also

a tendency for objects to blur in the very near and very far distance. Scar 3D completely fails to throw things at the audience in an attempt to scare them, which is kind of the point. Whether this is due to the limitations of the technology or just director Jed Weisbach is unclear.

Ante la situación...

Building for a live-action
3D feature has been
feature. Three

Ergonomics: 100-110

other hand, this is like
being locked. On

In Retrospect, 9634

leave you psychologically scarred, but not in a good way. OK



LET'S TALK ABOUT THE RAIN

WIKOVA
Agathe Wilkova
and
BADOI Jean-Pierre Badoi
and
Agathe Wilkova

THE RAIN
Agathe Wilkova

Something about

the south of France lends itself to sun-drenched rom-coms – the passage providing a release from the slog of urban life. Agnès Jacou's third film as a director *Let's Talk About The Rain*, immediately gets to work shattering some of these stereotypes. Set in the height of summer, the southern weather is unseasonably wet, instead of expressing joie de vivre, characters were stifled by their surroundings.

Agathe Wilkova (Jacou herself) returns to her childhood home in the south. She's a writer and feminist who has decided to enter politics. France's gender equality quotas mean she's been sent to the region to balance

the electoral list, but she clearly doesn't want to be there.

Her sister Florence (Pascale Arbillot, lives in their childhood house with her family and Algerian housekeeper, Mimouna (Mimouna Hadj)) Florence is unhappy in her marriage and harbouring resentment about being the less-favoured child of her recently deceased mother. Mimouna's son, Karem (Jamel Debbouze), is an aspiring filmmaker who, together with his friend Michel (Jean-Pierre Badoi), decides to make a documentary about Wilkova for a series on 'successful women'.

As with Jacou's previous films, 2020's *The Rules of Others* and *Look At Me* in 2004, *Let's*

Talk About The Rain is a blend of closely observed relationships and family drama, employing a cinematographic technique of using long shots with all the key protagonists assembled on camera to capture the family dynamic. And once again she has joined forces with Jean-Pierre Badoi to pen the screenplay.

Yet there's a much stronger comic influence running through the film than in her previous work. Badoi's role as Michel – all driving eccentricity – is handled brilliantly, backed up by strong performances from Debbouze and Jacou. Yet the film feels a little bit like it's teetering on the edge between encounters and all-out farce. Several scenes descend into pure slapstick, detracting

from the more nuanced social and political messages. Jacou's approach to love and relationships is also surprisingly sentimental at times – not least in a disappointing denouement.

Jacou's films always have something interesting to say – and there's no doubt she's a talent – but, while enjoyable, this isn't her best work to date. **Ed Glezer**

Anticipation. *Alonso, no more rain!* **Two**

Enjoyment. Great comic moments, but the film is not always clear about where it's headed. **Three**

In Retrospect. *Don't dream it, be it.* **Three**



CHOKO

DIRECTED BY Chuck Slack
STARRING Matt Damon,
Edward Norton, Amy
Poisson

INQUIRY
REPORTING

"I'm not who you

think I am." This protest from Victor Mancini (Sam Rockwell), protagonist of *Choke*, should be heeded closely. For while Clark Gregg's feature debut may be adapted from a novel by Chuck Palahniuk, while it may feature a self-deluding protagonist who regularly attends group-therapy sessions, while it may tap smartly into the delicious state of contemporary culture and while it may close with an indie song (Radiohead's "Rackwork") that feels like it was scored for the film, this super-sleazy comedy neither is nor should be confused with David Fincher's iconic male-angst epic *Fight Club*. The sooner you get that particular idea out of your system, the more you can appreciate Gregg's film for what it really is.

Victor leads a life of illusion. He is a sex addict drifting from one loveless encounter to the

next, a disgruntled Colonial re-enactor at a historical theme park, and a self-confessed "evil scheming douchebag," serially begging his own asphyxiation at swanky restaurants to pay for the hospital care of his once politically and now medically demented mother, Ida (Anjelica Huston), who no longer even recognizes him. Along with his equally lost buddy Denny (Jared Willman Hentze), Victor purchases an aimless sentence of momentary gratifications.

Then suddenly change arrives. He finds real love with Ida's unorthodox new physician, Page (Kelly Macdonald), he comes unexpectedly close to learning the identity of his long lost father, and he discovers that he might just be a new Messiah, sent to save an imperfect world. All are truths that prove hard for our pragmatic protagonist to swallow. If at first it seems episodic and fragmented, this is because

Choke charts Victor's path from moral and spiritual chaos towards something like clarity, with everything flying into place in the mile-high ending. Gregg is best known as an actor (you can see him here playing Lord High Chivalry), but he also proves to be an assured director and fearless adaptor, never shying away from the bolding, if not downright sacrifice, of his source—while the ensemble cast offers suitably unflinching performances.

Set in the riotous and absurd of postmodernity—where things are rarely as they seem, where truth is merely the episode of discontents, and where meaning is endlessly deferred—*Choke* is a shaggy-dog story for the raunchies. It plays post-the-paral with an array of mixed metaphors, unified by their collective concern for the difference between appearance and reality, as its desperately disconnected anti-

hero goes on a quest to find (or at least to stop avoiding) something, anything, not in a world of feckery, fantasy and lies. That the resulting adult *Beverly Hills* should turn out to be not only intensely funny, but also endlessly surprising—and, yes, genuinely affecting—is no less than a miracle for our age. Also that.

Anticipation: *Must, see! Fight Club style: www.fightclub.com! No.*

Enjoyment: *Hot. [Choked] where is Tyler Durden? Yes.*

In retrospect: *Hang in there — it's an erotic gospel. For the over-the-top: Four.*

See page 16 for an interview with Chuck Palahniuk.

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**CONZO: THE
LIFE AND WORK
OF DR. HUNTER
S. THOMPSON**

DIRECTED BY **Ray Collins**
SCREENPLAY BY
**Thompson, Anthony Quinn,
Anthony Quinn**

**11/11/11
CONZO: THE
LIFE AND WORK
OF DR. HUNTER
S. THOMPSON**

Every once in a

while someone comes along who so embodies a movement that their DNA becomes intertwined with it. Hunter S. Thompson was gonzo – an often paranoid, anti-establishment journalist, writing with dry witicism and highly distrustful of government. The style he invented – named after a James Booker blues guitar riff – was an evocation of late '60s sociology tumbled, for Thompson, by drinking his body weight in alcohol and ingesting as many hallucinatory narcotics as possible.

Highly gifted, weakly ironic and extremely funny, Thompson took his own life in February 2005, at the age of 67. By then he had achieved cult status, from teenage boys attracted by the unconventional lifestyle to thespians who marvelled at his loud ramblings. His death left

a void that Alex Gibney's documentary attempts to fill, wrapping up the great man's life in all its multifarious complexity.

Gibney is lucky to have had high level access to Thompson's closest friends and colleagues in the two years that it took to put the film together. Ex-wife Anita Thompson, ex-president Jimmy Carter and writer Tom Wolfe are just a few of the characters appearing on camera. Viewers also get a great insight into Thompson's friendship with artist Ralph Steadman, a self-described 'Catholic charmer' who turns into a drug-munching abstract cartoonist under Thompson's rather particular tutelage.

Johnny Depp also features, narrating much of the film and reading excerpts from Thompson's writings. Depp played the writer in the excellent

adaptation of his most famous book, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, which clearly had a profound effect on him. That said, it would have been interesting if Gibney had explored this angle, rather than employing Depp simply for voiceover duties.

The film chooses to focus on the period from 1965 to 1975 when Thompson was at his most prolific. There's a lot of detail on his time with the Hells Angels, plus his *Fear and Loathing* on the Campaign Trail with Richard Nixon and George McGovern. But there are also rarer glimpses of Thompson, from black-and-white home footage to his hysterical 1970 campaign to become the first ganja-smoking sheriff of Aspen. But there's precious little on his demise, when the writing dried up and the mood swings became more unpredictable. It's touched upon,

but it feels like an afterthought.

Then again, this is Thompson's posthumous swansong – a highly personal tribute to the iconic writer that chooses to focus on his greatest moments. What emerges is a tragic story of a man forced to live his persona – to be gonzo 24/7 – which finally took its toll. But it's a highly enjoyable look back at a writer, the likes of whom we'll never see again. **8/10** *Stacey*

Anticipation:
Thompson cracks a
three-year silence.
Wrong it is. **B+**

Enjoyment: Stage
and politics: what more
could you ask for? **Fair**

In Retrospect:
A great retrospective
of the original anti-
establishment Rock. **Fair**

We offer Alex Gibney, director of *Gonzo*, a penny for his thoughts as America takes to the polls.

You look at this campaign now, and there's a lot I could say about both candidates in terms of their problems. But in terms of their archetypes, there is the guy who's leading us towards a bright future in a sense of idealism and possibility, not unlike idealized Presidential candidate George H.W. Bush. And Clinton, like Hoover, is trying to capture the disappointed sentiments of people who are angry and don't know why. He's trying to capture their fear and their anger — as an Hoover would, their 'fear and loathing' — and he wants to ride that to the White House much like Hoover did.

Bush as a character is not unique, he's a kind of character type that keeps coming up over and over again in stories for something enduring — the dark side of the American character. I hope that comes through in the film.

I think that's the reason for doing the movie, to be honest. There are times when, in this country anyway, the most credible news sources are a comedian — Joseph P. Cole — who's actually acting as somebody else. So not only do you have a guy who's making jokes, he's pretending to be somebody who he isn't. That's how funny-burly things are because that's the only credible voice in a world where the lie becomes so literalized.

The degree of cynicism with Sarah Palin, I mean, there were brief moments before I could catch my breath when I saw her at the convention, and they'd stage-managed that moment where you had this woman standing up, very attractive, very young and so forth, but also as proud of being who she was — the anti-intellectual and all that — and sort of saying, 'Are you angry?' Yeah, I'm angry too no one with me. I know no one else who's doing, look back on, we both feel the same way. We're in this deep shit now. But over time I think people are beginning to understand that what they want is a President and not somebody whose Foxweek magazine is *People*.

With Palin, it's blind rage, it's righteous rage. Unfortunately, since reason, that's what the Republicans have been so good at doing in the United States: marshalling righteous or blind rage. I have a brother who is a big Sarah Palin fan, he's a Bush husband fan, you know, and it's because he feels disappointed — he doesn't have a good job, he's angry and he feels like all these liberals in Washington are all elites and they're just laughing at him. But if he were to stand back and analyze the Republican policies that are keeping him in poverty it might be different. Politics is not just policy platforms — it's fear and it's swirling emotions. But the emotion that the Republicans are stirring in this kind of blind rage



BELLE TOUJOURS

Look for the new film by director Manuel de Oliveira, *Belle Toujours*, this fall. www.belle-toujours.com

more color
from the 35

By the time you

read these words, Portuguese director Manuel de Oliveira should be celebrating his 80th birthday. A reason to rejoice, in addition to the fact that the film he is producing (he's made five shorts and a feature since he finished this one in 2005) still manages to be coherent, witty and socially astute.

Belle Toujours is Oliveira's way of saluting past heroes, most notably Luis Buñuel, to whose 1967 film *Belle De Jour* the acts as a charming addendum. *Belle Oger* (starring in for Catherine Deneuve) assumes the role of Severine Seiry, the one-time bourgeois prostitute — now 30 years older and wiser — who is passed into spending a scandalous evening with one of her old customers, Michel Possaki's Henri Hassan.

There's tension in the air when they first meet, due largely to the fact that Severine is eager to know whether Hassan shared her late husband's or her clandestine erotic adventures

all those years ago. The two leads play off each other in a magnificently discreet (and subtly amusing) manner with Possaki clearly relishing his upper hand and Oger somewhat skinned by the notion she's allowed herself into. Inter-cut with beautiful, long-held shots of the glowing Parisian skyline (to signify the passage of time), *Belle Toujours* is in the end a cute enquiry into the ethics of severing ties with the past. It's a small film, but a beautiful one. **A-** *Ann Mack*

Anticipation:

Reuniting one of the classics of the '60s — could go either way. **Three**

Enjoyment: Perception, witty and perfectly realized. **Four**

In Retrospect: Some may find it changed due to its simplicity, but others will find it delightful. **Three**

Check out www.BelleToujours.com for a full transcript of this interview.



LW Lies talks to director Jonás Cuarón about family, history and filmmaking.

LW Lies: How did you come up with the concept for *Afe (Ma)*? What made you decide to make a film out of photographs?

Cuarón: I wanted to do something with the time format as [Chris Marker's 1962 film] *La Jetée* but do it a bit differently. I wanted it to be feature length so I had to work really closely with the narrative so that people could sit through 80 minutes of photographs. The other thing I wanted to do was match the way films are visually done by taking the photographs first, and then use them to write the screenplay. One device that I was able to use with photographs was the zero-angle shot, which I felt worked really nicely, both for creating a kind of anonymity with the characters and for developing the characters as two people, inside and outside. Finally, I wanted to break the myth of film being this really expensive format. I wanted to do a film that you could do yourself at home.

LW Lies: Is that idea of accessibility behind the competition you have launched for aspiring filmmakers?

Cuarón: At the festivals, most of the people who were inspired by the movie were young people, wanted to see that you could do films in this way. The competition was a good idea to promote new ways of making films. Also, I posted a list of photographs from the movie online because I found that the story that I told is one of many stories that could be told with these photographs. It's very interesting in seeing what people will do with this format.

LW Lies: Why did you decide to focus on people who were very close to you?

Cuarón: I think taking photographs of my reality allowed me to be honest. What I enjoy about the final work is that it breaks many stereotypes—the character of the girl from the US coming to Mexico is not the stereotype of the American that is very rude as a tourist. She is the opposite in a way, really self-conscious. So I think it allowed me to photograph a very intimate reality.

LW Lies: Why didn't you use actors for the dialogue?

Cuarón: Part of what I wanted to capture was the essence of that year, and the voices of my family came with that essence. So I decided to record all the family members except my grandma because at that point he'd had surgery so couldn't speak. I was lucky because the main character, my brother, was acting as he felt comfortable. All the characters kept their real names except my girlfriend because I knew it would be awkward for my brother to be saying many things about her, but all the family members were pretty cool with the process. *Fulltime love*

Head online to www.1000cinemas.com to check out the transcript and for more info about the short film competition.

LAKEVIEW TERRACE

PLAYING

PRODUCED BY JONAS CUARON
WRITTEN BY JONAS CUARON
DIRECTED BY JONAS CUARON

Popular legend has it

that Samuel L. Jackson signed up for *Snakes On A Plane* as soon as he heard its unusually blunt title. No reading the script for him—just a quick phone call and sign-on the dotted line. He liked the concept that much.

It's a cute story. But if it's true, what convinced him to take part in *Lakeview Terrace*? Well it's the title, a random pairing of words that indicates nothing about the film's content or indeed anything else? Well it's the chance to work with Neil LaBute, the celebrated playwright whose last film was the mortifying remake of *The Wicker Man*. Or was it, perhaps, a great big pile of money?

Lakeview Terrace costs Jackson as a thuggish, single-parent cop. He's also a racist. So when a young mixed-race couple move in next door, it's time to wheel out the patented Dad Muthafucka routine. It's an act he does quite well—but boy, hasn't he seen it before. It's hard to get excited by this effort even when Sam parks down his trousers and goes mental in his

boxer shorts, it feels depressingly fixed and familiar. We know it, and he knows it too.

If his new form in mainstream Hollywood to successfully deal with real-life issues in an informal, intelligent way—but at least most films make an effort to appear sincere. *Lakeview Terrace* treats racial tension as a real excuse for yet another post-week thriller. Any pretense at incisive discussion is abandoned by the close of the first act, clearing the path for a spate of violence and a nauseatingly simplistic resolution.

On the basis of this and *The Wicker Man*, LaBute should really stay away from movie pictures. As for Sam, well, let's hope he enjoys that nice fat cheques. *None Nelly*

Anticipation: Jackson goes except Again? Whatever. Two

Enjoyment: Feedbackably enjoyable—almost affirmatively so. Ten

In retrospect: Don't play it again, Sam. One



19th Annual
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SELECTED BY AUSTIN CARP
FESTIVAL OF FILM & MUSIC
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Executive produced

by Alfonso Cuarón. *Año Uno* marks an auspicious debut for his son, 27-year-old Jonas. The project began as a year-long photographic assignment in which the fledgling filmmaker took spontaneous images of people in their everyday lives. At the end of the project, Cuarón and his partner, Gissela Harper, completed an installation in which they mounted the thousands of images in one room, ordered in scenes composed of shots.

Considerable began to emerge and a natural narrative developed when it became obvious to Jonas that the most photographed subjects were his younger brother and Elena. From this template emerged *Molly and Diego*, the two fictitious characters that form the kernel of the film's self-reflexive narrative concerning an impossible romance

Molly (Harper) is a 21-year-old American who travels to Mexico and ends up renting a room in the house owned by the family of 14-year-old Diego (the eponymous Diego Cordero). A close relationship immediately develops and Diego, who had previously been consumed by desire for his cousin, Emilia (Emilia García), redirects his obsession. Molly enjoys Diego's affections, finding the attention and respect missing from her relationships with boyfriends back home in the US. The tension continues to grow until Molly returns to New York. Led by his heart, Diego decides to run away to the Big Apple and attempt to turn her obvious tenderness for him into romantic affection.

Crafting his characters to correspond with the photographs of Cuarón and his younger sibling, Cuarón further blurs the lines between fiction and reality both

by casting Cuarón as Molly and by insisting on using the real people who appear in the photographs rather than actors to record the written dialogue and voiceover narration. The one exception to this is the character of Salvador, who is interpreted by the character actor Fernando Becerra. Salvador Cordero, Jonas Cuarón's grandfather who passed away during the making of the film, was the author of the novel *El uno*, and his writing exerted a major influence on the film, not least in its treatment of the impermanence of things and the passage of time. As well as poignantly depicting the difficult path from adolescence to adulthood, *Año Uno* also skillfully observes the experiences and sensations of being a foreigner (Molly in Mexico; Diego in New York) and the embryonic boundaries that separate people.

Though clearly indebted in

concept to Chris Marker's 1962 film *La Jetée*, *Año Uno* should by no means be assigned to its shadow. Illustrated by the brilliant sound design of Martín Hernández, this is an equally bold and thrilling piece of filmmaking that redefines the possibilities of the medium. *James Nevel*

Anticipation

A Chris Marker-inspired film from the son of acclaimed Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón. *Four*

Enjoyment

A coming-of-age love story, meditation on foreignness and a technical tour de force rolled into one. *Four*

In Retrospect: The heralding of a major new talent. *Four*



HUNGER

WOLF CULPIN: *It's James McQueen's CIA and MI6, and Fassbender and Sands represent British soldiers*

by David Karger

Shooting on location

In the harsh, geometric spaces of the Maze prison, *Hunger* McQueen has produced a biopic of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands that is doused in violence. It is the violence of the warriors against the inmates. It is the violence returned by the inmates themselves. But it is also the violence of cinema—the lurking, lingering gaze of McQueen's camera, the sickening slaps of flesh on concrete, the echo of all the horrors that the Maze has seen and heard.

Bobby Sands (Michael Fassbender)—gunman, politician and martyr—was the leader of the IRA inmates in Northern Ireland who were protesting their right to be recognized as political detainees. When Thatcher's government refused to negotiate, preferring instead to beat the opposition out of them, Sands

went against orders to stage his second hunger strike, one that would eventually lead to the death of 10 prisoners.

It's fashionable to talk about artists-turned-filmmakers who treat cinema like a canvas, but McQueen (whose last exhibition saw him put the faces of Britain's Iraq War dead on stamps) has brought the full dimensions of the medium to bear. And in Michael Fassbender he has himself a charismatic performer at the top of his game. This is a star-making turn for Fassbender (or perhaps a star-creating one, given his recent ubiquity), which has something of the Christian Bale in both its physical commitment, and the depth to which he is able to disappear into character. It's a brittle, belated turn that lapses into stillness only in the

film's signature scene—a 20-minute single take in which Sands and a priest (Liam Cunningham) debate the morality of his actions.

If that sounds contrived, in fact it isn't. It takes *Hunger* beyond its comfort zone as historical drama, and brings it into the queerly light of the present day: It begs the question where else in the world might these conversations be happening? With an icy clarity, McQueen sets about implicitly dismantling the narrative of British self-identity. We see ourselves as a country that has always been on the right side, acting in the right way. And yet, he says, we have a history of using propaganda and violence to distort or destroy uncomfortable truths. And if we did it then, perhaps we are still doing it now.

But for all that *Hunger* is a

rough, gruff and aggressive experience, the message never overshadows the medium. And though, at the very end, McQueen finally swears from the path of ugly realism into visual metaphor, it's a small slip in a film that otherwise exudes control. **Must-See**

Anticipation

IRA films have a shared history—this

Enjoyment—An uneasy but urgent experience. **Four**

In retrospect

Business. Important questions, but none at the expense of a dramatic narrative. **Four**

See page 88 for an interview with Michael Fassbender

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LWlies takes time out from the city with Liverpool's own king of culture, Terence Davies.

LWlies: *Of Time and the City* is structured so as to resemble the fragmented nature of memory. Was the test that you hadn't made a documentary before an advantage in terms of not being too linear or objective?

Davies: Yes, but I had some basic knowledge of what I said to the editor that we should cut an like it as before. I was never right from the start on all the finding documents that it wouldn't be linear and that it would be subjective. Some things did cause problems. I was told that I had a sufficiently contextualised the modern war. Well, that's reasonable, of course. I have. It may be not of experience but I have contextualised it. It is a subjective essay over this I wouldn't budge.

LWlies: Is it fair to say that sounds have equal value to the images?

Davies: Oh no, yes I think I've got a very good musical memory, not just of what was said, but what was heard. At 10, nobody talks to you, so you listen all the time. To these football commentaries as a quarter to ten on a Saturday even huge - like a mistake. Like the one I used in the beginning of *Glenn Gould*, Bill Evans of the shopping basket. I had no idea what it meant but it was like a musical mistake, like old speaking. It was fabulous. I think my ear is very acute and my musical memory is the same because these things are visceral. And I think if those things are true people will recognise them as true, even if they are highly artificial.

LWlies: The music also acts as a counterpoint to some of the harsher images, particularly the atom clearance.

Davies: Music as a counterpoint is always much more interesting. My favourite music in *Chobson* - I think that *Boleyn* is one of the greatest achievements in art. But when he does at the end of *Vergil*, and I can't even read the play without weeping. *Vergil's* life has been destroyed. He realises all the years he has wasted have been for nothing. And the last line is, 'Oh my child, there is such a weight on my heart: if you only knew how much my heart aches!' And his name says Bernard-a-half pages about hope. And you know that that hope is going to be crushed when she gets to 80. And you cannot watch the end of that play. You just weep. What he shows you is the result of complete disillusionment. It's so simple, but Chobson, what a genius! If you can do that with images and music there is something sublime about it.

LWlies: What do you think of the Liverpool of today?

Davies: It is not the city I grew up in. All the places associated with my childhood are gone and that is hard to hear. Going back to Liverpool, it was very hard not to feel that something profound has been lost. *John Wood*

EASY VIRTUE

REVIEW

PRODUCED BY BRUCE WILSON
STARRING NOEL COWARD, LITA STRETTON
DIRECTED BY JOHN HUGHES

If *Easy Virtue* was an object, it would be one of those souvenir trinkets decked with a winding portrait of the Royals that tourists take home as a reminder of lovely, old-fashioned England and its apfiling upper classes. Kitsch, harmless, Englishness for export. But in 2005, this is hardly pushing the overseas envelope, is it?

This is the second adaptation of Noel Coward's play following in the footsteps of Alfred Hitchcock's 1935 version and a return to the director's chair for Stephen Elcott, the man behind *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, *Queen of the Desert*. The aim? To jazz up the Jazz Age for modern audiences. Coward meets the parents. If you like...

It's a pleasant enough comedy that sees an American bride racing-car driver Lita (Jessica Biel) causing a stir at the English country pile of her new husband (Ben Barnes). A loathsome, peroxide blonde in a world of nousy English aristos, she soon locks horns with her sour-faced mother-in-law (Kristin Scott Thomas) who's not up for diluting the family gene pool with red, white and blue blood. And there it is... for the rest of the film.

Coward is renowned for his spiky comedies of manners and subtle social dissection, but *Easy Virtue* is lacking in both departments. To be fair, there are chuckles, but no rib-crackers amongst the catty asides and wry retorts of the urbane-cast, although the butler (Kris Marshall) tends to get the last laugh.

Elcott keeps the film moving at a good clip without providing any real depth to the characters, while the social satire is, these days, irrelevant. Indeed, the director appears to have tapped out most of Lita's back story (bly suggested in the film's title) so it's hard to root for her beyond hoping, as she does, for eventual escape from this stuffy English setting. *Lucy Fisher*

Anticipation - Looking jackets at the groovy *James Bond* done Red Coward - this could go either way. *Yes*

Enjoyment - Looks nice, nice cast, nice setting. Oh, it's a failed film. *Yes*

In Retrospect - Pure Bull. Coward Park, there ain't it. *Yes*



OF TIME AND THE CITY

EDITED BY **John Mayhew**

THE
CITY

Shown to rapturous

acclaim at Cannes, where it was presented in a special sold-out screening. *Of Time and the City* marks the welcome return to the screen of Terence Davies. Arguably the UK's most definitive living filmmaker, the early feature *Secret Voices*, *Still Lives* cemented his auteur status before *The Neon Bible*, an arguably misjudged adaptation of John Kennedy Toole's novel, and *The House of Mirth* saw the director working on a broader scale with international financing. In the eight years since *The House of Mirth*, however, Davies has seen various projects fail to materialise and – as he has been widely reported, was cut adrift from the UK film industry while other lesser talents found funding easier to secure. For Davies, a deeply sensitive man, the sense of vindication following the reception of this impassioned documentary about his Liverpool birthplace must have been pronounced.

Created as part of the Digital Departures scheme, set up by Northwest Vision and Media to be in with Liverpool's City of Culture status, this documentary and hugely personal poem to Davies' hometown brilliantly blends a poetic verbal account of his early life in Liverpool with contemporary and archive footage of the city. A eulogy to his birthplace that also weaves together the themes that define his early narrative works (homosexuality, Catholicism, death, loss and the power of cinema). *Of Time and the City* also expresses great anger and regret.

This is particularly evident in the heart-breaking black-and-white images (many of which are reproduced from Nick Brownfield's *White Gates and Behind the Red Stripes*) of the post-1945 slum clearance programmes, which saw the working-class communities relocated to purpose-built flats on the outskirts of the city. It is

also present in the contemporary footage showing the Liverpool of today as a place of relative loneliness and desolation, where alcohol is peddled to young teenagers and where the costly makeover and regeneration initiatives have come at the expense of a distillation of personality and identity.

Named in Davies' own distinctive voice with quiet grace, dignity and a frequently playful sense of humour (the audio clips of *Around the Horn* are especially ripe and poignant with innuendo), the film has been deliberately structured as a work of fiction so as to act as a beaconing, if largely memory-driven and non-linear portrait of a place to which there was always so much more than Liverpool and Everton football clubs and the popular street sounds of the Beatles.

Of equal note to the images we see are in fact the sounds that we hear, with Davies and his attentive producers drawing

together a rhapsodic collection of music including Handel, John Tavener, Loeft and Mahler. For Davies, music, film and culture in general always provided a refuge from the realities of the world, and *Of Time and the City* ably performs a similar function. Arriving hot on the heels of Guy Maddin's *My Winnipeg*, it also reminds us of the redemptive power of the documentary. **John West**

Anticipation...

Featured in the profiles in Cannes: Film

Enjoyment... Almost as emotional to watch as it must have been to make, this is a brilliantly constructed portrait of Davies' birthplace. **Five**

In Retrospect... A film that feels as if it could not have been made by any other filmmaker. **Four**



CHOKING MAN

DIRECTED BY Simon Baker
STARRING Simon Baker
Ages 15+ Rating: PG

THESE KITCHEN
KNIVES...
CUT DEEP

So you've been a camera assistant on Ridley Scott's *The Duellists*, Richard Attenborough's *A Bridge Too Far* and Richard Donner's *Superman*. You've made pioneering music videos for Michael Jackson (*Billie Jean*), Dire Straits (*Money for Nothing*) and A-Ha (*Take on Me*). You've even been a jobbing director on features like *Electric Dreams*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and *Mia and the White Lion*. England's Manager: Now, for the very first time in your long career, you get to conceive, write and direct your very own independent feature project. Congratulations. What do you do?

Steve Barron's answer to *Choking Man* — a quiet, unassuming film about a quiet, unassuming character Jorge (Octavio Gómez) is a hoodwinking Ecuadorian immigrant so culturally shy that his eyes

are always averted and he barely ever offers a word. But Barron makes up for the impenetrability of his protagonist's exterior by suggesting a richly textured inner life. Here Jorge's nervous disorientation is captured both by the camera's handheld restlessness and by the tendency of the lens to focus on single, arbitrary elements within the frame. Meanwhile, Jorge's daydreams are visualized in colorfully animated interludes, inspired by the distorted Hemlich Manoeuvre poster in the diner where he works as a dishwasher. At night, when he has returned to his apartment, he mutters to himself his expression through the taunts of an aggressive (if imaginary) roommate (Paco Andújar).

All of which makes *Choking Man* a tough film to pin down: On the one hand, it joins the ranks of

Brainwashed, *Clean, Shaven*, *Spider and Kitten* as a "suffering over" film, in which a disturbed anti-hero, struggling to distinguish fantasy from reality, has within him the capacity both to destroy and to redeem. On the other hand, it is a celebration of migrant experience, set in the most multicultural area of the world, Jamaica, Queens, where over 140 languages are spoken. Jorge may embody an extreme form of marginalization, but his evolving relationship with new Chinese waitress Amy (Eugenia Yuan) — mediated not through words but through an exchange of cultural objects — shows his tentative first steps towards integration and what customs officials refer to as "normalization." He might be suffocating in his own isolation, but there is still a place for Jorge at the diner's Thanksgiving table.

For all its concern with

social and mental deintegration, *Choking Man* is a strangely tender film. Grounded in authentic performances and settings, yet elevated by lyrical imagery and Nico Muhly's eclectic score, it ends up as much like the poster and protagonist from which it takes its title, warranting closer attention than it is ever likely to get. **A- (B+)**

Anticipation: There is no buzz, but it looks promisingly nothing all the same. **Three**

Enjoyment: Neither too kitten, nor too dying — easy to swallow all around. **Four**

In Retrospect: Strange, beautiful yet understated — it leaves a lump in the throat. **Four**



QUANTUM OF SOLACE

INTERVIEW: Daniel Craig, Olga Kurylenko, and John Batch, *Quantum of Solace*

RELEASED
October 5

Becoming transmission:
deciphering the top secret
mission files from our Q&A
debrief.

121: There might be one thing that we can all agree was good about it, which was Daniel Craig. **141:** Daniel Craig is magnetic. The one really good thing about the film because of the way he approaches the character, is the momentum of it—like a shark that can't stop moving. Some of the shots are structured almost so if they've cut it half a second after the action has already begun, as if even in the edit they can't quite keep up with him. Although actually, given how fucking shit the rest of the film is, it's probably just bad editing.

141: I can sort of see what they were trying to do with this character. I think what they wanted to do in *Casino Royale*

was show a man who's a bit of a frog and turn him into what he needs to be to be James Bond. In this one, they were trying to show that Bond is a necessary evil for our way of life. But they just fell back into the old stereotypes, and you can't have the stereotypical James Bond that was built up over the years of Roger Moore winking at the camera, and also try and say that you're having some kind of semi-serious political discussion about the way of the world.

141: I think even if the vision for the film had been good, it wouldn't have mattered because Marc Forder can direct an action film.

141: That was my problem: it was just a dull, dull film. There was nothing. It was just completely unmemorable—unmemorable locations, unmemorable characters...

141: One thing on the locations that spring to mind watching this is that it's actually based, not on a true story, but there was a peasant revolt in Bolivia when an American company tried to privatize the water supply. It's a really contemporary and relevant story line. But what this film does, and it does the same with the locations, is strip all these events and places—which are in themselves rich and meaningful and steeped in history of any kind of meaning. That's what Hollywood does. Anything that is rich and complex gets stripped of meaning until it's just a two-dimensional backdrop for something that they think is more important, which in this case is explosions and tits and ass.

141: I was just sad to see them fall back on 'em Diesel-type stuff that we've seen a hundred times before. And there's one scene

with the plane that was just fucking unforgettable because it took Bond back to *Die Another Day*, the CGI was so shit. What a let down.

141: Even where there were a couple of good ideas for action set pieces, they were terribly executed. Marc Forder doesn't know where to put the camera to shoot an action scene, and he can't pace one, and his editor can't cut one.

141: It was such crap. It really pissed me off.

141: At the very least, *Casino Royale* failed to deceive, whereas this doesn't even flatter.

Screened

10/1 3.5/5

10/2 3.5/5

10/3 4.5/5

Check out the full review at
www.officialdanielcraig.co.uk



OSS-117: CAIRO, NEST OF SPIES

CASTING BY THE HOLLYWOOD CASTING COMPANY, LOS ANGELES, CALIF. (Casting Director)

WRITTEN BY
JACQUES

'OSS-117' is the

code name for Hubert Bonisseur de la Bath, a French James Bond-like with more luck than intellect and a nice line in sharp suits. Sent to 1960s Cairo — a veritable hotbed of international espionage — to investigate the death of a colleague, he takes on religious sects, a displaced royal family, a clutch of Nazis and a bevy of beautiful babes, all with a cocktail in hand.

Based on a trashy series of mildly exotic adventure stories, the first of which actually appeared four years before the name 'James Bond' ever entered our consciousness, the film's critical success in the high-brow French press was something of a surprise.

Resoundingly silly, there are some laughs to be had, not least an ongoing gag with a chicken farm, and an exceedingly nonchalant sexual torture scene. The humor flies a little close to the wild at points with jokes including the slightly gemp-inducing silencing of a resistor for causing sleep disturbance. However, an adept performance from Jean Dujardin, with a fabled ruff and a raised eyebrow at the ready, assures that these always rest on the right side of

acceptability. They partially play on OSS-117's Western arrogance, rather than poking fun at the foreign culture he encounters.

The plot, with its carefully signposted twists, is just about strong enough to be entertaining in itself and not solely as a platform for the extended jokes. The film looks good too, with deliciously retro colours echoing the stylized and high camp performances, and adding authenticity to the period setting. However, the humor is too often lost in translation for English audiences, based as it is so firmly in French culture and stereotypes. Still, *Nest of Spies* is an enjoyable after-noon slice of Giallo comedy for a midwinter escape to the sunny '60s. **Passion buy**

Anticipation: A signal about a told-for-one super spy — sounds like we've seen it before. **See**

Enjoyment: Funny, if a little French farcical. **Three**

In retrospect: Scores a shockingly shiny 4.0/5.0, with alluring hints for having on the sleek machine. **Three**

Interrogating top spymaster Michel Hazanavicius.

LMU: A lot of the humor of OSS-117 is very 'French'. How well do you think it translates outside France?

Hazanavicius: He showed the movie in different countries and it's not the same reaction in all of them. In the United States, people laughed more than in France. I think it's not so French to mock the French. This is very English or Belgian. In the States, they laughed earlier in the movie because they catch the joke quicker than in France. In France people wait to see exactly what the movie is like before they allow themselves to laugh.

LMU: It got very positive reviews in the serious press in France. Were you surprised by the response?

Hazanavicius: I was surprised because it's a comedy and when you do a comedy you don't have much good press in general, but we have been very lucky for this one. Maybe it's because of the movie and maybe it's because French comedies are not so good. They can be very fun, but in terms of cinematography, the ones to make the movies, they are not so good. So we had the chance to make a stylish comedy, which I liked.

LMU: What were you inspired by in terms of the look?

Hazanavicius: The first Bond movies, the Hitchcock movies from the late '50s, and the French farces of that period.

LMU: The character OSS-117 comes from a series of French books from the '60s. Is the film much like the books?

Hazanavicius: The books are very bad. The character is really racist and misogynistic and homophobic. The scriptwriter tried to read a book and he told me some sentences in the book which are terrible, very horrible, so we forgot it and made our own character. We just took everything bad in the character and tried to make it funny.

LMU: You do sometimes push the comedy quite far, even though it's quite a gentle film. How far did you feel you could go with that?

Hazanavicius: I wanted to go as far as possible but I didn't want people to feel embarrassed to have laughed. There was a lot of work to make these jokes digestible for the first 30 minutes. There's a presentation of the movie itself. When the audience starts to say, 'Okay you're politically correct, stop with that', then we can go on. We also tried not to have one single target, because when you go as stupid as I don't know anything. It doesn't hurt anybody, he just doesn't know. He says when he thinks it's good to say and because he's French, he's white, he's Catholic, everyone who's not like him is under him. The other point was to put the action in the '60s, so the audience feel comfortable because you can enjoy the distance and judge it. If you did actually live those jokes today, it's not more it would be digestible. **Passion buy**

op



BLINDNESS

DIRECTED BY Fernando Merelles
STARRING Mark Ruffalo, Julianne Moore, Jesse Plemons, David Oyelowo

Release Date: 11/11/10

A man goes blind.

Within 24 hours, more have followed, victims of an epidemic: no cure, no cure. The government locks down the city, quarantining the blind in an abandoned asylum and leaving them to fend for themselves. The only person unaffected is the wife of an optometrist (Julianne Moore), who feigns blindness in order to stay with her husband (Mark Ruffalo) and help him adjust to this devastating new life.

Set in an unnamed city in what might be the present day, Fernando Merelles has created a film that deftly undermines the audience's ability to anchor themselves. The result is a queer kind of dislocation—an unnerving intellectual blindness that brilliantly opens the feeling of being left adrift in a suddenly hostile and unpredictable world.

As the government struggles to cope with a rising tide of panic,

the blind are left to fend for themselves. Despite the efforts of the doctor and his wife to maintain some sense of civility, things take a Lord of the Flies-style turn for the worse and a violent nihilism takes hold. Led by Gael García Bernal, a gang of inmates seizes the food, determined to extract a high price from the rest.

What follows is a near masterpiece of human drama—a pitch-black morality play in which the characters are stripped emotionally and physically naked. Without denouncing disability (as some have claimed), *Blindness* offers an unflinching look at our capacity for evil and the destructive power of despair.

Here, in the asylum, the action is almost unbelievably ugly. Merelles couldn't have made this film three years ago; nobody would have believed it. But in a world that has witnessed

Hurricane Katrina and heard whispers from the Ashford in the dark days that followed, *Blindness*'s bleak cynicism is all too credible.

But on either side of this middle 45 minutes, the film makes misjudgments. Merelles and CoP Ciner-Charlotte run the metaphor of light and dark into the ground with a series of tiresome visual tricks. And problematic too is the relationship between Ruffalo and Moore: It is already under strain when the epidemic takes hold, but what begins as a brilliant study of gender politics, role reversal and sexual frustration goes awry to a typical Hollywood conclusion in which disability is just a journey of self-improvement.

Overshadowing of this, however, is an astonishing voiceover from Danny Glover that might have been a small job on Morgan Freeman but turns out to

be a genuinely riveting narrative gambit that treats the audience—hitherto granted much respect—like children. The film's final shot, meanwhile, sacrifices real courage for timid ambivalence.

So close to greatness, *Blindness* is a fascinating but flawed drama that is nevertheless worthy of a second look. **Mark Ruffalo**

Anticipation: Blinded word of mouth on Cannes, but *Blindness* had a juicy subplot of the wife. For

Enjoyment: Amazingly difficult to sit through—sometimes for very good reasons, other times for very bad. **Three**

In Retrospect: Really, it's the film that became more apparent over time. **Three**



LEMON TREE

THE LEMON TREE
DIRECTOR: SIMONE STASS

STARRING: SALMA HAYEK, ALI SULIMAN, ZIAD
CASTING: MICHAEL ALI SULIMAN

The phrase

'Neighbourhood watch' assumes a whole new meaning when you're a Palestinian widow and the Israeli defense minister moves in next door. Popping over the Green Line border to borrow some sugar isn't really on the cards. And anyway, doubtless it would require rather more than that to neutralize the bitter relations between Salma (Hayek) and the minister's military entourage, who promptly announce plans to bulldoze over her modest lemon grove (her sole source of income), dubbing it "an absolute and immediate military necessity."

To say that *Lemon Tree* is based on a true story is largely redundant. It's so painfully familiar and functions as such a neat metaphor for the Israeli-

Palestine situation that one is almost overcome by weary resignation before the opening credits are over.

While plainly exposing the insanity of Israeli security measures and the horrific injustices they result in, *Lemon Tree*, as with *Rakia's* best-known features, 1999's *Cap First* and 2004's *The Syrian Bride*, tells like a lesson in textbook *east-meets-west*. So, Hayek's affecting performance is mirrored by the defense minister's wife Mrs. Rosa Lipa (Mahmal) who observes Salma's plight across the fence and grows in sympathy with her attempts to challenge the military order through the Israeli courts. Both are lonely women whose children have fled the nest, and the film is at its most interesting in its

serenine study of this juncture of women's lives (which would make a fine subject in its own right). One particularly moving moment sees Salma, unexpectedly answered by a budding romance with her selfish young lawyer Ziad (Ali Suliman), remove her long-buried fiery from leather pillow stuffing.

It's a shame, then, that the uneven tone, if not the plot, sometimes descends into an almost *Don Drakovich*-style *women-against-the-system* drama, despite Ziad's heartfelt protestation that "only American movies have happy endings."

Rakia, should be praised for bringing together a cast and crew of mixed ethnicity (at his relentless quest to universalize roles removing the film's path. It opens with an artfully shot

sequence of lemon picking, charmingly overlaid with the lyrics of the Peter, Paul & Mary song "Lemon tree very pretty and the lemon flower is sweet, but the fruit of the poor lemon is impossible to eat." *Rakia's* film, however well intentioned and presented, is similarly hard to swallow despite its

Anticipation: Swept the audience board at the Berlinale so looks promising. For

Enjoyment: A bitter-sweet study of a country where the personal is political. **Time**

In Retrospect: Leaves a bad aftertaste. **Two**

BODY OF LIES

RELEASED
September 21

The deadliest weapons

in the war on terror aren't guns, grenades and tanks. They're BlackBerry, e-mail and satellites. Ridley Scott's *Body of Lies* takes its place in the flux of Hollywood tech-thrillers straining hard for political relevance. But William Monaghan's dense screenplay overloads with characters, subplots and details that muddle up the confusion and deuse the excitement.

What it does have are a trio of newly performances. Leonardo DiCaprio is the CIA's man in the Middle East, Russell Crowe is the doughy intelligence chief who tracks his progress from Langley. Together they plan to lure and

terrorist Al-Saleem (Jovan>About-bully-out of hiding.

Crowe has little to do, but DiCaprio gives a committed performance that almost eclipses his boyish looks, although it's still hard to buy him buttoning heads with some of the world's most dangerous men. Especially when one of those men is Jordanian intelligence chief Mark Strong. Engaged in a battle of wit and will with DiCaprio, Strong is effortless dangerous and charming – and he blows Leo off the screen. Ridley Scott does his fair share of that too. As if bored by the muggy plot progression, he punctuates the movie with some truly conservative hi-booms. He



also throws in a thrilling duel between attack helicopters, a rocket launcher and a pair of trucks racing through the desert.

But none of it's enough to give the film the momentum it needs to pull clear of a swamp of details. Monaghan's script inherits a similar problem to the one he wrote for Scott's *Kinship of Heaven*: too much talk, not enough agency. Complex and serious it might be, but we need a deeper dig into the moral mess of

the War on Terror. **Justen Gooder**

Anticipation: Great cast, but Ridley Scott seems to be fading. **Three**

Enjoyment: Talky and confusing despite knowing moments. **Two**

In Retrospect: DiCaprio may be coming of age, but Mark Strong has definitely arrived. **Three**

QUARANTINE

RELEASED
Sept. 21
Directed by
John Erick Dowdle
Starring: John
Cusack, Jane
Fonda, Peter
Onorati

RELEASED
September 21

Here, for once,

is a film that truly captures the essence of its cultural surroundings. Not, as some might argue, because it's a first-person horror flick with socio-political undertones. But, rather, because it's a deadbolt remake of a movie that was only released last year. Sony have even seen fit to include the last shot of the film in their own trailer; now all they need to do is somehow turn it into an iPhone application and we'll have 2006 in a nutshell.

Bitter sentiment aside, *Quarantine* is a fairly unimpressive third ride. A complete reconstruction it may be, but at least director John Erick Dowdle and his team are plundering from decent source material. Apart from an extended opening sequence,

this is essentially a full-scale recreation of the shaly-con Spanish shocker *[REC]*, in which we follow a young TV presenter (Jennifer Carpenter) as she sets about shadowing a team of fire fighters, experiencing the action through the eyes – or rather the viewfinder – of her attendant cameraman (Steve Hearn).

An emergency callout brings the group to an apartment block downtown, where events take a *Night of the Living Dead*-style turn for the worse. Some what bizarrely this situation seems even less credible than the giant monster scenarios of *Cloverfield*, but at least the perspective is handled with a reduced degree of nausea-inducing *Shake-o-Vision*. The buildings zombie-like denizens are loudly gruesome



while the grim atmosphere is helped significantly by the tight arrangement of some tense set-pieces – particularly the dread-inducing arrival of sinister figures in hooded suits.

At just under 90 minutes, *Quarantine* is a slimline horror that packs plenty of enjoyable moments into its relatively brief runtime. There are several good ideas on display here, yet it's hard to forget that most of them were originally someone else's. Despite its technical proficiency

the film is symptomatic of a wider problem: a lack of creativity that can't be ignored. **Five stars**

Anticipation: Another remake, but at least the original turned heads. **Two**

Enjoyment: Gishy and goshy. **Three**

In Retrospect: Well made, but a remake nonetheless. **Two**



THE GIRL IN THE PARK

With 100% Rotten Tomatoes approval, this is a must-see for anyone who loves a good thriller.

Available on DVD & Blu-ray



THE WARLORDS

With 100% Rotten Tomatoes approval, this is a must-see for anyone who loves a good action movie.

Available on DVD & Blu-ray

Sixteen years after her daughter is snatched from the park, Julie (Sigourney Weaver) has never recovered – alienated from her remaining family, and friendless in her high-powered job. Then young, beautiful (but terminally flaky) Louise (Kate Bosworth) enters her life and gradually things improve. Weaver's performance is commendably brittle and guarded, and the janky shooting and somber lighting enhance her uncomfortable relationships with everyone around her. Yet the premise begins to wear thin as the film becomes wounding and repetitive, and the character of Louise also grates – the studiously innocent, troubled-but-oh-so-attractive young girl being an overworked stereotype these days. *Problems lay*

Three of Asian cinema's biggest stars collide in this big-budget battle epic set during China's brutal nineteenth-century civil war. Army General Jet Li, bandit leader Andy Lau and his confidante Takeshi Kaneshiro swear blood-brotherhood oath and go about turning the tide of the conflict. Too often a blank canvas in Hollywood, Li becomes a different creature when acting in his own language, and *The Warlords* harness him with some terrific fight sequences. But despite the actors providing a compelling human angle to the dusty, doleful drama, the script isn't quite strong enough to sustain the 130-minute runtime. It's no surprise to find that eight screenwriters had a crack at it. *Jonathan Cook*



INKHEART

With 100% Rotten Tomatoes approval, this is a must-see for anyone who loves a good fantasy movie.

Available on DVD & Blu-ray



OUTLANDERS

With 100% Rotten Tomatoes approval, this is a must-see for anyone who loves a good action movie.

Available on DVD & Blu-ray

Superior fantasy fodder based on the bestselling novel by German author Cornelia Funke, *Inkheart* is a short, sharp and sweet Christmas diversion about a top-hatted, dual-chinned redoubter (Brendan Fraser) who has the power to bring characters from classic literature to life when he reads out loud. In doing so, however, his coquettish wife has been sucked into the pages of *Inkheart*, and he must travel to a Germanic village to do battle with the book's repulsive villainess. Part of what makes Ian Slatkoff's film such a treat is the way it dispenses with caddy explorations in favour of getting to the heart of the story, which sees Andy Serkis, Paul Bettany and (especially) Helen Mirren all deliver large portions of finely-seasoned ham. *Alan Meek*

A lack of decent colour grading betrays the low budget of Dominik Lien's debut about the plight of Polish workers in the UK, and gives the movie the look of a film school piece. There are only two shots in which Lien uses the form itself to convey meaning. One is an Eisensteinian juxtaposition at the start of the film, when, in Odense, Adam's (Jakub Tosiak) terminally ill father dies at the exact moment that his son is watching a video of his brother Jan's (Pawel Pawlikowski) career-ending football injury. Jan's fall on the pitch also prefigure his fall off it, as Adam travels to London to discover that the brother he once looked up to is now the head of a gang supplying illegal labour to the construction industry. *Rebecca Peck*



RIVALS

Starring François Cluzet, Isabelle Huppert, Vincent Cassel, and Jean-Pierre L  aud

Available on DVD and Blu-ray



THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES

Starring Lily Fanning, Saoirse Ronan, and Saoirse Ronan

Available on DVD and Blu-ray

Lyon, the late 1970s. Police Inspector **Fran  ois** [Guillaume Canet] learns that his brother, **Ge  ral** [Fran  ois Cluzet], has been released from prison after serving 10 years for murder. There's no happy reunion but an uneasy agreement to draw a line under the past. However, real life and former demons are soon in pursuit, and the siblings find the paths they choose to follow leading them to the same tragic conclusion: *Rivals* is a quietly engrossing police procedural that echoes *Mel  le* and *De  n*. The narrative feels a little over-familiar, but there is compensation to be found in the first-rate performances – with Cluzet establishing a reputation as one of French cinema's finest leads – and the vividly realised period setting. **Aaron White**

Lily [Dakota Fanning] is 14-years-old. On top of the trials of adolescence, she has an abusive father to contend with, and is haunted by memories of accidentally shooting her mother as an infant. Much of the film's focus is on Fanning's precocious performance, and yet the surrounding story of the black women with whom Lily finds solace is far more interesting. A group of intelligent, independent sisters fighting their own small battles in the Civil Rights movement. August [Queen Latifah], June [Mo'Nique] and May [Regina King] are masterfully drawn, softly spoken, bone-deep women. It is their performances, especially King's superb elegance and restraint, that prevent the film becoming a *Milk* schlockfest. **Frederick Grey**



SUMMER

Starring Sam Neill, Saoirse Ronan, and Saoirse Ronan

Available on DVD and Blu-ray



DEAN SPANLEY

Starring Sam Neill, Saoirse Ronan, and Saoirse Ronan

Available on DVD and Blu-ray

Shaun is a teenage boy fuelled by booze and lust who embarks on the most eventful summer of his life. As typical disadvantaged youths he, his girlfriend Katy and their best friend Daz spend their days making and dodging trouble. Cut to the present day and Shaun [Robert Carlyle] is a full-time carer to the now disabled Daz [Steve Denty], whose worsening illness forces Shaun to confront the events of his past. Rather than wallow in the despair of a turbulent adolescence, *Summer* plays out its story as a simple tale of love, youth and friendship. Thanks to Gleeson's sensitive direction and Robert Carlyle's out-of-the-earth charm, it's both an affecting and sensitive drama. **Anna Caw**

In his previous life, **Dean Spanley** [Sam Neill] lived as a spire. When plied with his favourite booze he goes really-eyed and recounts the pleasures of worrying sheep. Fink Junfer [Jennifer Northrup] believes that the clinic may be able to help his father [Peter O'Toole] – a cantankerous old bugger who refuses to grieve the death of his son, having previously lost a beloved dog. This is the rather ludicrous setup for *Tom Freen's* Edinburgh comedy, but if it's a premise you can swallow you'll probably enjoy the whole nipping yarn. The banter is quietly witty and the dark story eventually builds to a surprisingly moving conclusion, thanks largely to yet another masterful turn from O'Toole. **Neve Kelly**



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Chapter Five[®]

In which we discuss the medium of film in its many mesmerising forms

20

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In Profile

Chuck Palahniuk CP 21/021962

WORDS BY AILSA CAINE
PORTRAIT BY SAM CHRISTMAS

WISE WORDS

A conversation with Chuck Palahniuk should be an enlightening experience. As the author of *Fight Club*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *Devil's Museum*, he has produced novels that have 'modern classics' stamped all over them. His work is bold, direct and visceral – perfect for putting off Middle America. In the flesh one might expect an anarchic eccentric, past Johnny Rotten, past Tyler Durden. But Chuck Palahniuk is a normal

Chuck Palahniuk is a normal – albeit depressingly so. He sits quietly on tea, is mildly spoken and polite. But he can also namedrop every film director as he happily at his favourite book (*The Great Gatsby*) or his affliction for 70s cinema.

Gone is the latest of Palahniuk's novels to be adapted for the screen. It's classic stuff – Victor (played by Sam Rockwell) is a workaholic struggling with his inability to form meaningful relationships. Add to

that a mentally unstable mother figure, and you have a great study of human behaviour. The relevance of the adaptation has not escaped Palahniuk. "Recently I was reading that around 85 per cent of college men use internet pornography as a regular habit," he says. "Social commentators say young men are finding it harder to make attachments or hooks to go on dates because accessible pornography is changing the depth with which people connect. And that seems so much like Victor in *Gone*. I wonder if people will reach a moment of crisis when they realise that they're unfulfilled, and that crisis will generate a delayed emotional attachment of greater strength."

It seems Palahniuk is not the nihilist that your mother warned you against. Indeed, the society he so happily dissects still holds the occasional surprise. "When

people tell me what they think of my work it's usually shocking because it says more about them than my material. I was on a plane to L.A. once and a male flight attendant came up to me and said, 'Are you the *Fight Club* guy?' And I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Would you tell me the truth if I given the secret?' He said, '*Fight Club* is really about gay backpackers, it's about gay guys covering each other in public, isn't it?' I realised he was talking about his experience, and I was so shocked that I told him he was right and asked him to keep it a secret. He was so happy."

In an industry where people use cheap shock to sell their book/film/whatever, Palahniuk's open mind is refreshing. He appears more interested in the explanation of human behaviour than creating a war about it. After all, it's the readers who cause the fuss. "The strongest emotion to my

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material is in a way country where it doesn't have to be read hard, but where that it's an oppressed culture. *Pyg* did was concern us among the Mormon population. Young Mormons are loved *Pyg* and at night would run fight clubs in Mormon churches. And also because, I'm told that the books are really popular in Russia."

So how does Palahniuk feel about these responses? "It's too big to digest, it's like having a 500-pound chunk of chocolate – it's so big you don't even try to eat it, it's just there."

Perhaps it's a fear of such response – of his popularity becoming too big, the chocolate obscuring him rather than the other way around – that drives Palahniuk to push at the boundaries of social acceptability. When his first attempt to publish a novel was met by rejection for being too disturbing, he reacted by

penning *Pyg* *Gek*, partly in an attempt to detach the publisher further. It's this legacy of rebellion that's given the author his cult appeal. The motive, though, is not simply to shake up the status quo. "The idea is to take something from your own life that's frightening and unrespected and write a story around that area through a metaphor. By the time you're done writing, the book you've explored and vented about that area and you're no longer attracted to it. At that point the issue disappears."

Coming from the land where the therapist is king, it would seem that Palahniuk is not averse to "working through his problems". But if he feels that his motives are personal rather than a rant against dystopian society paid some fans out of pity, tough shit – he's an earned pleasure. "It's not about writing something to be liked. It's more important to write

something that will be remembered, that will actually trouble people and be in their memory for a long period of time. If something can linger in the culture long enough as memory, eventually public taste will change to embrace it."

As he believes were the final days of his run, Palahniuk sums up his version of our world and his work. "I don't want to dictate a message, but if I had to hope that someone would get something out of reading my work, it would be the idea that our lives are self-deceived. That if we have any hope of redeeming ourselves, it's through recognizing ourselves, and being able to understand what we have to achieve something better. All my books are about people making themselves to see where people, and in doing so, finding romance." A conversation with Chuck Palahniuk is an enlightening experience.

882 WORDS

MICHAEL FASSBENDER

Hunger is the making of him

FEEDING ON FAME

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Words

Matt

Bochenski

Hollywood types don't look about as unco'ed 'hens'. Right now, you need someone just to look at Michael Fassbender's CV. Fast-100 (he was the bland one with, he claims, the least amount of sex-quack enhancement), the projects have come thick and fast: *Prometheus*, *Diana's Angel*, *French thriller Eden Lake*, and a couple of snufflers for Judd Apatow and Anders Arnsdottir.

For Fassbender, the key to success isn't just down but *Hunger*, Steve McQueen's brilliant debut. He gives a terrifying performance as the emaciated hunger striker Bobby Sands, demonstrating that the Thatcher government's inhuman IRA inmates in the Maze are political prisoners.

It's a risky role for the actor, with no guarantee that his physical efforts would be rewarded by a first-time director. But Fassbender had faith in McQueen. "First in a room with Steve and you realize that you're going to learn something from the guy," he says. "I don't see this sort of work lightly, but I think he's a genius."

Besides, Fassbender had enough to worry about without second-guessing his director. The latter half of the film deals with the hunger strike itself, a harrowing portrait of the physical sufferings of prisoners. To prepare himself for the role, he decapitated his fat for a 10-week diet that cut his intake of calories first to 5000 then 600 a day. The average recommended daily intake for men is 2500 calories.

Contrary to expectations, however, apart from a two-week period of insomnia, Fassbender felt good. "It felt really focused, really centered, really a relief,"

he says. Instead, despite the dangers of rapid weight loss (he was on a strict medical instruction to gain no fewer than 14 kilos, he put down to 18), rather than clouding his mind, hunger opened his eyes. "We live in this society where if I want something, I take it, I eat it — it's so easy and readily available," he says. "When you take all that away, you actually become a more appreciative of the things around you. I don't want to do it again, but there is a level where it humbles you in a good way."

While *Hunger* is a detailed portrait of the last days of Sands' life, the film also has bigger things on its mind. It's impossible to watch the way the IRA prisoners are treated in the Maze without the movie's eye straying to Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. To Fassbender, whether you're talking about the IRA or Al Qaeda, it's a question of misunderstanding. "You can't just categorize a person as 'evil' or 'insane' — there's a situation, there's a history. We're all made up of the same material, and we need to start trying to face up to those things and understand those and not label them as something we can put off in the world."

That is a noble statement, whether *Hunger* can cut through the hypocrisy is a different matter. What's not in doubt is that this harrowing film announces that Michael Fassbender is a major new player.

Hunger is reviewed on page 32

Read online to check out the full interview at www.fatherhood.co.uk

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GAMING

Behind the scenes of *James Bond* and the *Call of Duty* game

BOND, GAMES BOND

By **Tommy Green** / **LOS ANGELES**

Words

Ed

Andrews

For years, the gaming world has been plagued by the multi-platform tussling to win the lion's share from Universal, Paramount, and wherever. It seems that gaming has become just another merchandising opportunity for film studios to milk a movie's branding potential—the equivalent of a sticker book in a digital age. But with games such as *Grand Theft Auto* now growing more on a par with Hollywood blockbusters, the medium is being taken far more seriously, with development budgets to match. *LAPD* spoke to Adam Osbourne of Tropyack, the company behind the forthcoming *James Bond 007: Quantum of Solace* game, a title which is blurring the lines between movies and games.

"Most movie licensed games usually have only taken six months to make," says Garschina, Co-Digital Director of the game. "They're usually forced into gaming decisions just weeks before deadline to fit with the idea of the movie." Therefore, it's not surprising that most turn out to be crap. With that in mind, Tropyack have spent two and a half years on the project, and as a result the much celebrated *Call of Duty 4* game engine is an exception to break with the established norm.

James Bond remains a licensed title and therefore highly protected franchise. Tropyack worked closely with Bond headliners Barbara Broccoli and Greg Wilson to ensure that the video game experience contained nothing as to a 44-year history. "They know things about *Bond* that we would never think of," says Garschina. "We had to cut our scene where there was truck blowing across the street. They insisted that *Bond* wouldn't have that—people don't

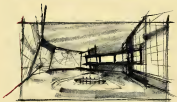
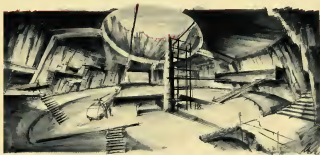
want to see that surrounded by crash—they want to see him in a car chase."

It was working so closely with the *Bond*'s producers that has made the project much more a creative collaboration than merely a licensed product. As well as having access to confidential plot details and making several visits to the set at Pinewood Studios, Tropyack also drafted in the film's stars, including Daniel Craig, Josh Duhamel and Mathieu Amalric, who lent both their voices and likenesses to the game. "There's always a risk when you're having a creative talent but it's very beneficial because you know you are going to get a great actor," says Garschina. "Having an in-game character as a real actor makes it ensure as you are able to pinpoint what they look like and how they act. The actors already have the character developed, so we better know how to animate them and expand on it."

Such a creative to detail is fast becoming standard as gamers demand an deeper plotlines, complex gaming areas and well crafted visuals. Konami's *Metal Gear Solid 4* saw legendary developer Hideo Kojima go the mile over 12 hours of cut scenes, a new concept in length based on gaming. According to Garschina, that is very much the future, but only where budgets permit. "The more cinematic you are you put in, the longer it takes to make a game. It takes thousands of people two years to make a film, and it takes the same with a game. Nowadays, you've got to make sure that cinematic content is available, but also skippable. We do have a lot of movie elements in the game, but if you don't want to see it, you can just press a button and get straight on with the action."

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WORDS BY PRUDENCE IVEY
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A rainy Tuesday morning in King's Crossbridge seems an unlikely place to meet the real life Q, but it is here, on a stylish covehouse, that Ken Adam, the production designer who made his name working with Stanley Kubrick and the Bond franchise in the '60s and '70s, now lives and works.

The creator of the gadget-packed sports cars and the imagination behind several over-the-top conceptions, including the Aston Martin space car, Adam was a trained architect and World War II pilot who combined practical expertise with a widdly, cosmogonic creativity to make the seemingly impossible and impractical a reality, at least on film.

Alongside 'Stanley' and 'Cubby' (Beverly), Adam created the personal cinematic film aesthetic now associated with Cold War war designs. The distinctively sleek, angular, high gloss look of his sets has become cultural shorthand for a certain type of power-hungry megalomania, and has inspired the decoration of many

a bachelor pad worldwide.

The groundbreaking look of his sets is celebrated in a new book, *Ken Adam Designs The Movies*, published by Thames & Hudson and available now.

We spoke to him exclusively about the man and moments that define his work. *Prudence Ivey*

DR STRANGELOVE WAR ROOM, 1964

"I had come up with a two-level set. Stanley liked it very much so I thought it was my working with Kubrick. Two or three weeks later he said, 'I'm afraid you have got to start again.' I think the War Room was one of the best designs I ever did because it fit so well into the dramatic screenplay. The actors felt so home and inspired. We didn't have computer-generated stuff so I designed the maps on electronic sound-drawing boards, pasted them on a plywood background, cut out where the symbols

were going to occur and put lightbulbs in them, controlled by switches. Very simple."

GOLDFINGER FORT KNOX, 1964

"A completely impractical design but it worked! Toned Artex got over 100 crates before asking how was it that a British film was allowed to film inside Fort Knox when the President of the United States is not allowed inside?"

YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE VOLCANO HQ, 1967

"That was the biggest set ever built in England at the time, on the lot at Pinewood. It was quite expensive, we spent over a million dollars on it. The producers had everyone look around one Sunday and they were saying it cost £4 million so they thought it would be more impressive."

Click out to www.kenadamdesigns.co.uk to view an exclusive copy of the book signed by Ken

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LOOKING BACK OVER TIFF '08

When is Toronto not Toronto?

T2

WORDS BY SOPHIE MAYER

It's hard to say what was the then British Empire's biggest building: the Royal York Hotel, which achieved cinematic greatness as an inn than the New York Park Plaza in *River at the Plaza*. It's been called *New York* by the *Sweet's* and *Tarzan* the *Good*. But, every September, Toronto puts on its glitz and attitude the best of the best: the biennial Toronto International Film Festival. It's hard to say what was the then British Empire's biggest building: the Royal York Hotel, which achieved cinematic greatness as an inn than the New York Park Plaza in *River at the Plaza*. It's been called *New York* by the *Sweet's* and *Tarzan* the *Good*. But, every September, Toronto puts on its glitz and attitude the best of the best: the biennial Toronto International Film Festival. It's hard to say what was the then British Empire's biggest building: the Royal York Hotel, which achieved cinematic greatness as an inn than the New York Park Plaza in *River at the Plaza*. It's been called *New York* by the *Sweet's* and *Tarzan* the *Good*. But, every September, Toronto puts on its glitz and attitude the best of the best: the biennial Toronto International Film Festival.

What with breaking ground on the Bell Lightbox (opened with Canadiana Orchestra's ear-wormy "To Build a Home" in the pre-screening slots), TIFF '08 was

a big, busiest festival. The anti-party (or pro-party?) "Surround" that kicked off screenings last year seems to be on the wane, but the sound of applause for volunteers is still heard and well deserved. Several friends moved about the Yonkers M'Donnell free concert in Yonge-Dundas Square, where the legendary Singapore Sweeney was introduced by Lydia Lee, three different managers recommended the gelato from Wolf Thugs at Harbour and Borden, and a group of students offered to workshop your reporter for having had her back with Agnès Varda.

Varda's *Les Muses d'Agnes* (definitely not her last film, despite Sandra Bernhard's claim in the TIFF programme, so the adoration she was already working on a series of accompanying short) was not just a highlight of the festival, but a main festival in itself, coming complete with a history of the *Argentine Theatre Festival*, a book outside Varda's Paris flat, some gaudily positing in Sino where she grew up, and a very animated Clara Mader

Combining whimsy with education as grief, *Les Muses d'Agnes* is no simple feel-good film, but on the face of a festival where serious topics made a comeback. Treated frantically (as in *There After Reading*), minutely (as in *Standing At Attention*), or unrelentingly (as in *Diagram*, *Eligible*), it was on much business as usual.

But smaller films like *Reading* (Albert Serra), *Almanac and Clock of Grief* (Lila Poon) and *Rain* (Martin Garsa) found serious joy. As Norey tells her grandson Mung in *Before Tomorrow*: "The dark is friends with the light." This film, which won the CityTV Best Canadian Film Feature prize, is a viral usage of filmmaking now: directed by an all-female collective, it was shot on location in Iceland and Vancouver, screened in three communities before playing at TIFF, funded by regional and national government, and made the hearts of an urban, one might even say cynical, audience. Although it's no longer called the Festival of Festivals, TIFF will open Toronto to the world.



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MUSIC RESPONSE

ThinkSync provides filmmaking food for thought

T8

WORDS BY MATT BOCHENSKI

ThinkSync Pulse is gearing up for its fourth annual competition. Designed to bring independent filmmakers and musicians together, ThinkSync encourages those filmmakers to download free tracks from its website, recording a piece of the film that makes the most compelling use of music in its soundtrack. There is a multitude of genres

available from electronic rock to acoustic, and the website is also an excellent resource for anybody looking to make tracks that offer the use of music in film.

Says ThinkSync co-founder Citi Warburton: "ThinkSync Pulse competition is unique in that it is the only competition to recognise and reward the use of music

within the short film format. In addition, by having the support of so many great independent music labels, the competition is special in the way it brings together the indie music and film industries so closely in collaboration." Here, hear

www.thinksyncfilms.com

DIGITAL DREAMWORLD

onedotzero rocks the Southbank

07

WORDS BY DANNY BANGS

From November 15-16, onedotzero are taking over London's Southbank to stage a celebration of all things digital as the filmmaking universe. This year, we're proud to be inspiring new generations of creative, computer programming, international short film, animation, live cinema performance and audiovisual collaboration, as well as provocative new ideas from the up-and-coming moving

image scene of tomorrow, alongside exciting new work by renowned filmmakers.

With its sights fixed firmly on the future (as last year the BFI Southbank's 25th anniversary celebration), the festival will welcome the film of 77-year-old director Jodie Cassin, and, more broadly, will take the idea of "cineyapes" as an intellectual backdrop. Most intriguingly, musical pioneer Nilsa

Sanchez will be performing as a cinematic from his new album.

As Shane Wilson, founder and CEO of onedotzero, explains: "This year's festival is a continually evolving exploration with curated music and stronger thematic direction. We have a very strong line up."

Click on www.onedotzero.com for a full festival breakdown.



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DVD OF THE MONTH

THE RED DESERT (1964)

DIR: MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI

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Winner of the Golden Lion at the 1964 Venice Film Festival, *The Red Desert* was Antonioni's first foray into colour, and it's never looked more beautiful than in this new high-definition restoration from the BFI.

Taking post-industrial Italy as its backdrop, *The Red Desert* tells the story of Giuliana (Monica Vitti), a factory owner's wife who has been emotionally damaged by a car accident. The first time we see her, Giuliana's presence grows out of smoke her stand out against the dark greyness of the factory. This indelible image is symbolic of her relationship to her environment – she's detached, all selfhood, unable, as her husband Ugo (Carlo Chionetti) describes her, "To reach".

By, on the other hand, appears perfectly tuned to this new world of cold, scientific industry. Although not against industrialisation per se, Antonioni was concerned with its social effects – with the people it would necessarily leave behind – and how it shaped Ugo's character to a rather

The plot is driven by Giuliana's fateful meeting with Gerardo, her husband's business associate, played by a brooding young Richard Harris. Antonioni's clipped style plays out their affair in somewhat confusing fragments, only partly explained by the fact that we share Giuliana's point of view. In her fragile, anguished world, colours come meaning, electronic frequencies.

In several shots, Antonioni had his crew spray paint the landscape grey to achieve the film's damp, dismal appearance

of sporadic flashes of bright colour, such as the factory's painted railings and ladders, parts that gripiron or startling effect. Although the director himself found the industrial world strangely beautiful, through Giuliana's eyes and ours it's portrayed as something frightening and alien. The only respite comes from a self-contained episode within the film, in which Giuliana is telling her son a story. Depicting a young girl on an idyllic beach, this is the only sequence that doesn't use filters, grey or electronic music.

All too soon we're plunged back into Giuliana's unstable reality. As the women on the brink of sanity, clinging to walls and the security of affection, you can't help but share the sense of vertigo, and it all gets a bit tiring. Vitti gives an impressive performance but, as one reviewer has remarked, "Is there any soap, and for how long, can one import soap?"

The pacing is undeniably torturous at times, and the disappointingly infrequent 'airy' scenes may leave modern viewers waiting. On the other hand, Vitti never loses her luminous screen presence, and Harris cuts a fine figure as her rescuer (in contrast there's even a look of Daniel Craig about him).

Across entry aside, *The Red Desert* is just about worthy of its reputation as a high point in modern cinema. A radical experiment in colour and sound, many commentators have claimed it's a film about colour itself. But there's more to it than that. Antonioni wasn't overly concerned with the environmental fallout of industrialisation, but his depiction of the damage it inflicts on an individual still rings with you long after the colours have faded. *Jeff Rimmer*

HOW THE WEST WAS WON (1962)

**OIRB: JOHN FORD, HENRY HATHAWAY,
GEORGE MARSHALL**
AVAILABLE: NOW

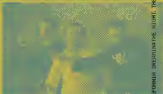
Not so much a history of the West, more an unashamed celebration of the western, this grand epic was major fodder for a tale of four generations of New Englanders heading powder in search of a better life. Featuring a quite literally all-star cast including John Wayne, Gregory Peck, James Stewart and Henry Fonda – and directed by Henry Hathaway, John Ford and George Marshall – this is a textbook Western that competes through an engaging American history with poise and warlike Indians, the Peary Express, the coming of the railroad and the Civil War all duly and cheerfully mythologised. *Nicholas...*



CALIFORNIA DREAMIN' (2007)

OIR: CRISTIAN NEMESCU
AVAILABLE: NOW

Based on a true story, this Romanian film is a fascinatingly observed, moving, and at times funny depiction of the fading of industry from the face of small town galleries. A team of NATO soldiers, headed for the Serbian border, are brought to a halt by the corrupt plotting of the town's mid official. As each moment gives way to lovelessness and heartache, the tension between the American expats (played by Arsenal Ionescu), and the Romanian businessmen becomes electrifying. Nemescu's tag is sleek just two days before the final edit makes the film's promise all the more poignant. And the bonus might appeal to fans of the award winning design team behind a certain independent film magazine. *Nick...*



THE NIGHT THEY RAIDED MINKSY'S (1968)

OIR: WILLIAM FRIEDKIN
AVAILABLE: NOW

This is a classic, but nevertheless charming, tribute to the 1950s burlesque scene in New York's Lower East Side. The plot follows a beautiful and more Jewish dancer (Barbra Streisand) who goes and butters her eyelids in a series of unlikely events and events in Minsky's show. William Friedkin's direction is classy and so masterfully experimental at times, and the film will show the story the better, but the sparkling vocal performance of Joan Richards and Norman Macdonald as a quaternary comedy duo, coupled with the film's anarchic humor and pace, more than make up for it. *Recommended. Jack...*



BUDDHA COLLAPSED OUT OF SHAME (2007)

OIR: HANA MAKHMALBAF
AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER 10

To a backdrop of substance forming in today's Afghanistan, we watch a thirteen year old attempt to get an education. The fading herself overcomes in the local schools, and work nowhere else returns, she struggles as a group of boys playing. They are the 'Buddha', and she, a girl with pretty eyes, an 'infidel' deserving of punishment. Her shallow grace day, she's ended for death by a woman and a paper bag 'death mark' is forced on her head. Escape is not an option. Ironically disturbing, this is another masterpiece from the talent of Makhmalf family, whose combined efforts have cinema and politics as well. *George...*



Lett There Be Punk!

WORDS BY JAY CLIFTON

CAPSULES CONTAIN ALTOSYNCSAM 30MG
50 CAPSULES

Don Lett's 1978 documentary, *The Punk Rock Movie*, is an up-close-and-personal portrait of the bands and people at the center of the London punk scene circa 1976. Made on a shoestring budget using a Super8 camera to record interviews and while audiences held in tension during performances, it's a classic example of successful underground documentary filmmaking. As the film is released for the first time on DVD to mark its 30th anniversary, *LettLive* speaks exclusively to the filmmaker.

LWLive: What inspired you to start filming Lett? The punk rock movement was very much about audience participation, it wasn't a spectator sport. The energy was an infection that you wanted to get involved. I'd seen a film a few years previously called *The Wonder Why* Cus [Perry Broadbent, 1971], a very funny juvenile film, and realized I wanted to express myself in some kind of visual way, but I couldn't see a way forward. When the punk rock thing happened in about 1976, the whole 'do it yourself' principle came into play. All my mates picked up guitars and I wanted to pick up something too, but the stage was kind of full up. So I picked up a Super8 camera, and using that DIT principle taught myself to become a filmmaker. I'd never been to film school, I never even read the instructions for the camera.

LWLive: Did you have a documentary model in mind when you were filming what would become *The Punk Rock Movie*? Broadbent says I had nothing in mind other than being able to capture what was happening in front of me. Super8

cameras didn't have all those auto functions that cameras have today. But I found that to be good for discipline. Now with digital technology you can buy a 50-minute DVD camera for a fiver and get coverage of everything. But that's not good for discipline at all. It was better when things were more expensive. The downside of affordable technology is that it's just because you can afford it, doesn't mean you can do it. Ultimately you need a good idea.

LWLive: Did you consider yourself an insider or an outsider as you filmed?

Lett: I wouldn't have got the screen shot. I did unless those people trusted me. My relationship with the bands helped to make it what it was. No one ever told me to turn the camera off, but then they didn't have to because I'd know when to do that myself. We were all on the same page, and there was a mutual trust.

LWLive: Would you still be able to make that kind of documentary today, given the way young bands are much more shepherded by managers and spokespersons? Lett: Those days, record companies rule. There's a spectrum of music that operates outside of that, but for the bands that have record companies behind them, and EK and the J&K and so on—all these people telling them what not to do—the result is that bands are scared to have an opinion because they believe it might affect their record sales. There has to be more going on, some other agenda than just trying to get product and have people into a passive consumer. That's why I don't make music videos much anymore, because all they want to do now is sell the record.

LWLive: Thirty years before punk there was Miles Davis and be-bop. It's now 30 years since *The Punk Rock Movie* was first released—does it seem as distant as a social era as be-bop to you, or do you think punk has kept its cultural relevance?

Lett: All counter-cultural movements eventually become part of popular culture, and the same goes for music and rock and roll. It happened to punk also. By 1979, punk had got kind of ridiculous and absurd, and a lot of the main purveyors actually removed themselves from it and became part of the whole post-punk scene, which I think actually was a lot more interesting. So what we're talking about is a kind of ongoing dynamic that does have a longevity and a continuity. All though you might wonder where that continuity has gone because as far as I'm concerned, culturally now is the West. It feels like punk never happened. When I got into music it was an anti-establishment thing. Now a lot of people get into music to become part of the establishment. How radical are you be if that's what you want? Having said that, I know there are young people out there who don't want what MTV or the Top 40 music is offering, and they're getting the internet along which gives them the ability and the facility to express themselves and get their ideas out there. So that's kind of encouraging. If you look back at the radio there's always something going on. 'Punk attitude' is like *The Force in Five Words*—you can't stop it but you do have to look in new places. It's not there.

Check out new film-obsessionist at its biggest—yourself one of 19 copies of *The Punk Rock Movie* on DVD.



THE ANIMALS FILM (1981)

DIRS: MYRIAM ALAUX, VICTOR SCHONFELD
AVAILABLE: NOW

Made when "vegetarian" was still a dirty word, this horrific documentary exposes the tax and abuse of animals in the food, pharmaceutical and beauty industry. Still relevant 27 years on, and now with a new director's cut, the filmmakers' shocking camera takes viewers into vivisection labs and onto the cold streets of New York, where human dead shoppers are quarantined in their dens. Bizarre pop music courtesy of David Byrne and deadpan narration from Julie Christie don't make watching animal torture any easier, but certainly lend this gory picture an edge. Scenes include an interview with Victor Schonfeld. *George Faller*



BABYLON (1985)
DIR: FRANCO ROSSO
AVAILABLE: NOW

Ragga, dub and metal politics collide in this powerful tale of black youth in the '80s, released the year before the Britton riots rocked both the capital and the conscience of the nation. Reminiscent of chore Jamaica crew flick *The Harder They Come*, *Babylon* tells the story of a young sound-system crew from south London, and their struggle to escape prejudice and poverty through music. Thick with patois and go-go music, and backed by a frenetic dance hall soundtrack, *Babylon* challenges the stereotypes held about young black men that were rife in the '80s and, some say, still remains today. *Michael Quirk*



Gunnin' For Adam Yauch

WORDS BY CHLOE McCLOSKEY

Music serves a major purpose in *Gunnin' For That #1 Spot*, Adam Yauch's hyper-stylized & full-on documentary, released on DVD on November 17. But a hip-hop head might question his picks – Jay-Z's 'Die 4 Your Shoulder' (House of Pain's 'Jump Around') Aren't they a bit puppy for someone who shaped the genre in its early days as the Beastie Boys' MCA? "I don't really think of the choices as puppy," he says from a stool in coastal London, "because I think puppy would be much more harmless, like a Will Smith record."

"Some of those songs are just anthems to me," he continues. "They felt like New York anthems, and New York was a big character in the film. They made those scenes feel big. This seemed like a better name than going as more underdogged."

Gunnin' also features Bobbito Garcia, the Puerto Rican hip-hop personality, cameos missing on the game. Was Yauch aware that Bobbito's track talk would feature in his life? "I had a feeling," he says. "We made sure we were recording Bobbito during the game. One of the things we did was make sure we had an act up all over the place. The reason it was recorded that way was, with so many things going on in the shot, we were able to make different scenes."

With OctoBass (Yauch's production/director/producer/music company) behind the project and lots of friends involved, it appears that he had a great old time. "It was fun, but I find I wind up doing those projects badly when I've been shooting things that have a lot of options upon which someone has to do work in post-production." It's a tough life, but, hey, a pup.





TIGERRO: A FILM THAT WAS NEVER MADE (1994)

DIR: MIKA KAURISMAKI

AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER 17

Personal white-haired kisser Jani Jaakkola flies to rural Brazil with Mika Kaurismäki and ageing, cigar-chomping producer Sam Puller to find out why Puller's jungle epic, *Tigerro* (announced by Darryl Zanuck in 1945) was never made. Having brought the footage he took on *Tigerro*'s location tour back with him, Puller shows it to the modern-day Kauris family, who delight in seeing their relatives on screen. Jarmusch, rubricatorily named as Raimon (too and cheap) joins, Kauris have felt out reviews with them. Sadly, we see thought about subtitles, so much of their history remains a secret, making the whole dinner not a bit of a waste of time. *Georgia Noble*



A SECRET (2007)

DIR: CLAUDE MILLER

AVAILABLE: NOW

A Secret, adapted from Philippe Grimbert's bestselling novel, centres a bit of a stir in its native France upon release. Named for *Il Ceneri*, it is an avowed family drama that spans over half a century. The story follows Dring and the *Butterfly* star and now *Band* villain Milla here *Amelie* as he searches for his elderly father who has gone missing. As events turn sour, memories of childhood and family strife increasingly under a backdrop of fascism and anti-Semitism. With a superb cast including Clémence De France, Patrick Brühl, Julie Depardieu and Ludovic Sagnier, this is high quality French fare indeed. *Gray Davis*



THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT (1972)

DIR: WES CRAVEN

AVAILABLE: NOW

Craven sews the seeds for future horror racers as a happy-dappy setting interspersed with hyper sexuality and murder, tension between his future as a 'horror master' and past life as a humanitarian professor. Cheap gags, Cravenian-like performances, and an attempt at cinema what all thing together here, in a story loosely adapted from Jacques-Augustin's *Virgin Spring* (1960). If you smothered through. Indeed, Craven's later *Nightmare on Elm Street* series' hauntingly creepy music may reveal an important lesson learned from this experience – don't let the lead actor record the entire soundtrack in your film, it produces the wrong kind of fright. *James Marlow*



HISTOIRE(S) OU CINÉMA (1989)

DIR: JEAN-LUC GODARD

AVAILABLE: NOW

If you can't do this collection of DVD's inspiring an informative documentary about the history of cinema, then you may be in for something of a surprise. Offering eight episodes, made over a period of 10 years, it is a sensory explosion that flickers between art, music, moving image, text and audio, ranging across a review of cultural references with little narrative direction. Arguing that an artistic documentary "is the only way to make history", Godard uses a post-modern sense of ideas, light and sounds to convey a parallelism, but it is an incredible vision of film. One for the fanatics. *Nick Pizzoli*





TEETH (2007)

DIR: MITCHELL LICHTENSTEIN

AVAILABLE: NOW

Ray Lichtenstein's son has discovered the family's lies as does he don off the surprisingly-modern look for his terror myth of 'vagina dentata' (a vagina with teeth) for his first feature film *Ginger Snaps* (1999) turns home as an tale of puberty and coming-of-age metaphors, and *Clutterbush* (1977) is the undisputed king of vagina comedy, however *Teeth* carries a fine sub-genre all its own. Issues of femininity and family are toyed with in novel ways, while many worthy targets are skewered through this hell-bell thematic device – notably the promiscuous culture of America, and an interesting argument on the perils of censorship. Ooh, and it comes with X-Ray packaging. *Shout! Women Mirror*



DONKEY PUNCH (2008)

DIR: DILLY BLACKBURN

AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER 10

Dilly Blackburn's debut feature revolves itself around an apocalyptic sexual massacre, the execution of which results in the death of a mother's son, one of a gaggle of nine dimensional women who have the misfortune to have been picked up by a charnelous, and eventually murderous, public delivery car. As though the sexual deviancy of *Blind* has been filtered through the mind of a *Pearlman* footballer, the film demonstrates from cheap-looking production to an over-long and poorly executed feature, whose workaday cinematography ineffectually manages to give away every twist and turn of the narrative. *Kugleby Marshall*



THE HAPPENING (2008)

DIR: M NIGHT SHYAMALAN

AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER 3

Opening with a suitably Hitchcockian title sequence, *The Happening* is, like *The Birds* (1963), concerned with a man (Mark Wahlberg) and a woman (Zooey Deschanel) trying to negotiate their relationship against the backdrop of an immense ecological crisis. To make like the fluttering psychosocial MacGuffin of Hitchcock's tale, Shyamalan's deadly natural disasters are as elaborate as more straightforward murder scenes of the principle of nature's revenge, reflecting contemporary preoccupations about environmental degradation and humanity's self-destructive drives. The spectacle that unfolds is certainly creepy, but Shyamalan never goes in to care much about either its victims or its survivors. Perhaps that is the whole point. *Steve Birt*



ERASERHEAD (1977)

DIR: DAVID LYNCH

AVAILABLE: NOW

Lynch's feature debut gets a very personal spring clean in this new release. Lynch himself has personally restored and re-mastered the film with a new transfer. Thankfully, despite its moves towards modern production techniques, *Eraserhead* remains its gloriously chunky old self. Lynch regular Jack Nance stars as Henry Spencer, a young man with big hair channelling it in a backwater industrial town. When his girlfriend, Mary X, gives birth to a fleshy illegitimate child, events unravel with a twisty, dreamlike excitement as the *corpus dea* is not taken hold. This is Lynch at his post-cried best – but is visually punk and artistically persistent. *Guy Driver*



THE SHORT FILMS OF DAVID LYNCH (1967 - 1995)

DIR: DAVID LYNCH

AVAILABLE: NOW

There has '80s effects, *An Arm and a Leg* (1967) and *Alphabet* (1968) - both undertaken by Lynch while still at art college - kick off this collection. But the real one here is *The Grandmother* (1970), which follows a boy who grows a granny to escape abuse from his parents. This is followed by the sensually indulgent *The Dunes* (1973). It all wraps up nicely with *The Cowboy and the Witchman* (1980) and the superbly brief *Lustre* (1995) - made using the original *Lustre* cinematography. A probably offbeat assortment that captures the true life dream state of Lynch and his shorted, making even *Frog Dream*...

BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL (1964)

DIR: GLAUBER ROCHA

AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER 3

A classic of Brazilian 'Cinema Novo' - a knock of 'Third Cinema', which sought to establish a new identity for Latin American politics via film - this is required watching for film academics, but not exactly popcorn fodder for the masses. Indeed, legendary Spanish novelist Luis Buñuel described Rocha's ambitious piece as being filled with "savage poetry", and Buñuel was a guy who scored his arguments with some serious shenanigans. So soundly yes, but enjoyable? No, watching as at 110 minutes, it took 10 times longer, and though it (influenced Jorge Luis Borges's and Brazilian landscapes are stunning), it "It's a very little struggle for most." (Google: *Black*...

ADULTHOOD (2005)

DIR: NOEL CLARKE

AVAILABLE: NOW

Following on from 2000's *Kidulthood*, Noel Clarke returns in the role of Sam, a west Londoner recently released from police serving six years for the murder of a local rascal. *Trife* The story follows a reformed Sam as he traverses the streets of London looking to make some dough with 'trife'-looking friends. While the film's dropout wit, violence and drug references are unoriginal and do little to develop the story, *Adulthood* does have more conviction than its predecessor. Clarke delivers the hard reality of street life in the capital, juxtaposed with the possibility of forgiveness and humility. A necessary watch. *Kid* *Adult*...

NEVER APOLOGIZE (2007)

DIR: MIKE E KAPLAN

AVAILABLE: NOW

This letter by Malcolm McDowell on his close friend Randy Anderson, the director who cast him in the masterful *J... (1966)*, works thanks to McDowell's skill as an actor. His energy like many of the more renowned scientists (Anderson spent an awful lot of time telling people to fuck off) and corrupts Anderson's love for the master world of British film. McDowell describes how the director developed a vocabulary to describe the work he admired or despised (there was never any subtle ground). In Anderson's own words, *Never Apologize* isn't "Mind" (On Love, anything that was "unimportant or subtle") but it's not "Love" ("beyond, important and pure") either. *Never Apologize*...



**WILD COMBINATION:
A PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR
RUSSELL (2006)**

DIR: MATT WOLF

AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER 3

Wild Combination, A Portrait of Arthur Russell paints a tender picture of the life and works of an experimental cultie whose life, like so many gay men living in New York in the 1970s, was tragically and brutally cut short by AIDS.

Russell, who also produced a host of classic alt-discs such as in the late '70s and early '80s, has found a cult following after his death, and has gone on to influence a number of contemporary artists from LCD Soundsystem and Hercules Love Affair to Daft Punk.

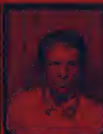
Director Matt Wolf, who cut his rock with his experimental home of the queer artist and activist David Wojanowicz but makes his feature debut here, intersperses more footage of Russell's performances with commentary from many of his collaborators, including avant-garde composer Philip Glass and best poet Allen Ginsberg, as well as Russell's parents and long-term partner, Tami Linn.

Growing up in small-town Ohio, Russell, a quiet and introspective teenager, found solace in music and drugs. As odds with his parents' social conservatism, he moved to San Francisco at the height of the hippy scene, joining a Buddhist commune and producing the satirical music of folk, pop, cello and haunting vocals that was to dominate his short life's mesmerizing musical output.

However, it was after moving to New York in the mid '70s that Russell found his musical success, producing classic alt-discs such as, firing up the dance floors of legendary clubs like the Loft and the Gallery, and collaborating with Patsy Cline, Larry Verne and David Byrne.

Wolf, focusing largely on Russell's more experimental output, reveals a compassionate and creative but somewhat difficult to work with and prone to introspection, but also a man who truly dedicated to his art and to making beautiful music widely acknowledged as it is true that while Russell's friends believed that his music was destined to find a larger audience, it was not to be — at least in his lifetime.

Wild Combination, a celebration of Russell's life, and his extraordinary music, is released on November 3. *Love is Greeting Me*, an accompanying compilation of his previously unreleased music, is available on Rough Trade Records with *Michael Queer*



**HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK
(1984 - 1985)**

DIR: JOHN HUGHES

AVAILABLE: NOW

From wedgies and snags to day-long detention and graduation in the lockers, *Thirteen 1/2* to find was the ultimate teen hell. Even if you're too young to remember the '80s, watching *High School Yearbook* — featuring James Gandolfe (1984), *Wild School* (1985) and *The Breakfast Club* (1985), just three of the staples Hughes knew to be set in the same — is more your count to no shame.

Back in 1984, James Gandolfe leaped back to the time "No Book" (a group in a man's key), according to www.fox.com as well as Michael Anthony Thelma Holly Russell's career. But if you're expecting a wet kiss of a chick flick — this being about a lesbian sophomore (Gandolfe) crushes with her big sister's boyfriend — you'll be pleasantly surprised. It will be the power to shock. As the opening credits fade, we see Russell's kid brother tell his father that he's got his first period, which "should make for an interesting experience, huh?" And then Russell finds out that her whole family forgot her birthday (a stomach burlap). This is not finally fine as we know it now — it's dysfunction as Hughes defined it. And though it isn't probably enough — and in the end, most right — leaving of the house (see it's an amazing portrait of an exchange market, and its dog in back control) — the girl gets pay over one minute a desperate choice.

Wicket of the time in *Wild School*, Hall, who based her Russell to be embarrassing degree as James Gandolfe, is a spot finding with the bullies. But luckily, her progression his girl's exposure to produce a book and blood, Holly LeBeau, dressed in one short run and high legged leotard. Her story, older sister. Her presence helps her sister James Gandolfe's constant coverage — nothing, including audience, her to what home life.

None of Hughes' characters have happy home lives, and nowhere is this more obviously than in *The Breakfast Club* (1985), which shapes a week, from queen, Greek, geek and her into the same friendship detour. With as much, they live up to their own problems, moving across to grow up to be like their parents.

Though this will be double sold to the *teenage crowd*, *High School Yearbook* includes new film including Hughes' films, coming in more beyond book and comes in its individual impact. But if that's not your bag, just buy *James Gandolfe's* (1984) *Wild School*, and he does with it. People like.

KOS77

SR72

**KILLER OF SHEEP (1997)
MY BROTHER'S WEDDING (1993)
DIR: CHARLES BURNETT
AVAILABLE: NOW**

Finally it's a film about death on good time, shot in black and white 70s film stock, with rich and acidic passion all over it, scenes of sheep having their necks slashed, skin slipped off and skulls covered with white dough-like flesh like a veritable art film. Emotionally, lonely kids crying at airports isn't traditionally a thing of beauty, but as part one of Charles Burnett's experiences of contemporary life in his *Killer of Sheep*, it's pure poetry.

Yet Burnett, apparently considered one of America's greatest film makers, is only now getting his first UK DVD release for his masterpiece. Luckily, the BFI is trying hard to make up for lost time, packing it with extras including a director commentary and interview, two early shorts and an indie-packed booklet. Burnett's full oeuvre, more linear, and perhaps more accessible film, *My Brother's Wedding*, is also being released with similar regalia.

Back to scenes of two solitary ones fed up with their lot – a working class priest in Burnett's missing ground, the black ghosts of Watts, California *and*, while *Killer of Sheep* is about an anonymous dough-throat worker – in like a surrealist, non-judgmental docu-movie, his 2013 film is a little angrier.

Karlene was the extra sportswear that makes up America Apparel's stock today, Parris (Steven Seia) works as his parents' laundry shop, lives in his basement, he never had the go-go that led his older brother to jump the ghetto for the Bay. As a result, Parris comes to his brother and his brother's friends – both black lawyers. In whose the unexpected demand of his criminally minded and usually charismless best friend, Slicker, clashes with their long-awaited wedding day, he's torn between family and friends, blood and justice. Neither film often a rushdown, Burnett simply shows us life as it is, tough. *Gregory Mable*

**SILENT RUNNING (1972)
DIR: DOUGLAS TRUMBULL
AVAILABLE: NOW**

There were other attempts at sci-fi and the movement that began to emerge in the late 1960s, *Silent Running* charts the journey of the American darkness space freighter, *Volley Foogo*. The Foogo is one of a fleet of eight giant ships dispatched from earth with the last remnants of plant life from a dead planet ravaged by industrialisation.

As the crew work for their cargo to be recycled in order to re-establish normal life, they receive an instruction to abandon their giant bases, an order directly disobeyed by botanist Freeman Lowell, who sacrifices his consciousness and charts a course into deep space.

First-time director Douglas Trumbull had worked previously on special effects supervisor on 2001, and this experience shows in both the movement pace of his own film, and through its visual effects, which made good use of model sets flesh out a modest budget. The themes of the film have proven remarkably prescient, with Lowell (*Braveheart*), emphasising the modern repulsive movement in his rejection of personal bonds and pettiness, and his transcendence of these industrial farming methods is a rejection of corporate conscience.

Silent Running was one of only a handful of films scored by Peter Dinklage, chosen by Trumbull for his background in folk music, and who made use of these connections to persuade Jimi Hendrix to contribute two songs to the soundtrack, including 'Romeo on the Run' and the sublime title track, whose lyrics have been read by many as a message against America's involvement in Vietnam.

The studio had initially hoped that *Silent Running* would generate a hit on the back of his previous top 50 success, but a bungled advertising campaign prevented them to release another track as a single, and back cover and film fell into obscurity. A resurgence of interest in folk as recent years has stretched in the soundtrack, having been released on CD, while vinyl copies of Decca's original release continue to change hands for £50 or more. Both film and score are a highly serious matter. *Gregory Marshall*



25mg

25mg

above
killer of sheep

ex-rent hell

by adam lee davies

hanky panky (1982)

HP82

DIRECTOR
SIDNEY POITIER

STARRING
GISE WILDER, GILDA RADNER,
RICHARD WIDMARK

BOX NOTABLES
SMITHSONIAN

CAGLINE
WHEN YOU'RE WANTED FOR A
MURDER YOU DIDN'T COMMIT,
CHASED FOR SECRETS YOU DIDN'T
STEAL AND RUNNING FROM PEOPLE
WHO WANT TO KILL YOU, THEN BLAH
FUCKING BLAH FUCKING BLAH. /

TRAILERS
THE AYATOLLAH OF PENSACOLA,
ROOF PARTY, THE LAST LAFFERTY,
BURNING UNDER

QWERTY/PICK
"THAT'S HOW YOU MAKE
A MALTESE CROSS!"

When producer Henry Kinnelhoff dug married Joseph Heller's *Midnight Cowboy* out of the office screen in 1970, he effectively closed the tin-died screen doors of perception that had been rattling like a beachball speed-bump for most of the previous decade. With the help of director Mike Nichols, he plucked hippies, did-behaving-rich kids and Prince-frustrating Miami Wenties ya-ya out of their college deferments, and fraggled their blood-red chokers deep into the moon-kissed noether of all the '60s — WAR. Specifically, the Mediterranean theaters of World War II, where your friend was your enemy, your

enemy was your only hope, and every action of heroic courage was judged solely for glau and need to stick your ass into the next coast of a Tender Love Airways license. Kinnelhoff B-52 on what smoke and mustard carpet-bombing means over a backdrop of the human condition.

In terms of modern cinema, however, even this unrepentant back-patch of war-tornism had to wait a mere minute for the release of *Midnight Cowboy* compared to the French Connection of cocaine that would unlock Kinnelhoff's inner 1962 follow-up *Hanky Panky*.

Steady-handed pig-pank Gise Wilder spouts forth a pill-up riddle of a perfume man in water under polymath and yuppie beachhead Michael Hanks as this under-theorized Midwestern Tex of a film which announced itself after a midline '70s. Gise was hyping his descent into the cowboy-copy, Richard Pryor co-starring, sensory-deprivation flash work which he was to see on the next channel decade. His wet Steady in war guide through 90 minutes of blackcock-hen screwball threesomes as a better new genre for this Hippie Room of the moment of eye-see — safe, self-lit, happy. It is not long, though, before we're left stranded on the coast in a flood of yet another surreal pathfinder with all the one-in-a-million of liberal war-p.

Starring pig-pank late a part originally conceived for Pryor (who as a late date was made "unavailable" for 60 to 90 days), *Sunday Night Live* veteran Gilda Radner sketches become capricious victim Kate "Punky" Pankhurst. The house-mad parody of Gise's frisky young, Radner quite remarkably approaches her headbitchy reverent role with all the elixir of Irish Night on the deli. Testament

to occupying the Wilderness across the country pursued by comedy great Richard Widmark's teary opposition, she is married through the blue bloom of a speechcocked narrative concerning the loss and/or recovery of some missing computer tapes or top-secret documents, or a castle in the air or High Brazil or Jan. Any Way. To Make It A.I.I. Stop.

Reckless (romantic conversations) pick-up, daylight (out of work film) are explored and isles are turned (the negative) in a judiciously steeped strange to somewhere disjunct *NP* from Gise's always-on-camera role about 1976's *Deliver Us*. But — like a rarely done of his pig-pank college — it's just too little and it's far too late. By the time Gise finds his rock-a-guffa and Widmark joins the big agency on the sky, you'll be missing Hanks on your TCB and wishing that there was surely be a better way than this.

"Circle 31 did not exist, he was positive of that, but it made no difference. What did matter was that everyone thought it existed, and that was much worse," concludes Heller's anti-hero Yossarian as a circle of cosmic recognition that could be all too readily applied to the workings of the HHI hegemony. Night after unrelenting night we remind films we didn't want to see made by people who simply couldn't have known what they were doing — but, just like tonight we can claim to have at any point gone and the wrapping notes of the Emperor's new cloth! No, we willingly pressed up and in doing so frantically pushed from our voices, wearing trails. They didn't even have to get those heads dirty — we dug it, we watched. And that, surely indeed, is much, much worse.

75mg

GENRE SPECIFIC

THE BRITS IN SPACE GENRE

JOHN WILLOW: THE MOON

In the days of back-room buffoon like Frank Whittle, proud, earnest, cheerful inventor of the jet engine, the idea that the Russians, or, God forbid, the rabid Americans, might become the dominant power in space exploration was just an alarming spectre. Yet, the Tanks and Irons had bagged the best Nazi eggheads while Bombardier Cherry tried to teach the Germans rocket, too. Britain had wit, vigour and good humour in space, and if that failed, there were the countless subjugated peoples of the empire whose oil and raw material wealth could be cranked in the drop of a pink helicon. For a brief time, even the British film industry had faith in a Britain saving the race, where the infinite mind-mangling universe would be no reason to forget your Pi and Qi.

Maintaining decency in the face

of zero-0 indignity was natural to the Victorian house builders in 1947's *The First Men In The Moon*. Co-adapted from H.G. Wells by British SF kingpin Nigel Kneale, the film relays the adventures of Joseph Cavor (Leslie Johnson), the bookies' garden shed inventor of all, whose 'anti-gravity gun'. Its workings are left mercifully unexplained, the point is that it allows Cavor to swing shark-baited in a manner so he thwarts fire of gravity's tyranny in a ship seemingly chucked from the rigours of spacelights by a fine walking wonder. Deceived within this underlined space is America's theory about darts, Cavor and his partner, Bedford, float free inside 0-helicon bags, sun-blinks and iron coils. They are accompanied by Bedford's fiancée, a character inserted to sell your studio ramblings that a more only

moon planet might mean a bit stinky. It was a point noted by NASA, who in early Gemini missions insisted on a dozen Mission Beach bookies on every payroll, less a contingency of million homecoming to take hold.

The most endearing image from *First Men...* is the discovery by a group of UN astronauts of a Union Jack hanging limply on the lunar surface, announcing that Britain had been First. To underline in 1964, it was a moment of quaint politics as a series of their vanishing empire came up against the harsh New World Order.

There are no such quakes about involving ghastly foreigners in Gerry Anderson's pre-*Space 1999* madback *Journey To The Far Side of the Sun* (aka *Deppely Deep*), just so long as it's made abundantly clear that Englishmen are in charge. But despite

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WORDS BY

DAVID GARDNER

these cosmo-espionage efforts ending entirely on home modes and the phrases "Find me" and "Don't help you, old man," these are no dusty *timeless* films. This is the future made flesh on a 1969 Buickwood bucket, where mission control is run by kindly bearded claymated droids and all firearms must be round, plastic and perfectly orange. This happens of you: Profumo Britain is the platform for tickling off the Yanks (double dosing) and the French (offensive harassment) in a binary anti-cosmos where global space agency Eurocos is run entirely by Jewish British poshies to whom NASA and "the Russians" must humble themselves for a piece of the action.

The financial pretensions of both these films are thrown into underpinning relief by what, without doubt, the most

accountable take on "what might have been" of Britain had pursued the rocket dreams of the back-room boys. Richard Lester directed *The Mouse on the Moon* (1948), the sequel in 1959's *The Mouse That Roared*, without Peter Sellers but with enough regrettably elegant but convincingly parodying British space programme as the fortunate offspring of conspiracy, self-interest and censoring imagination. He co-imagines plucky Britain as the Duchy of Grand Fenwick, a (mostly) honest business of reconciliation as a world buffeted by the turbulence of Cold War superpowers – just as the nation was itself in the early 1960s. Financial aid from first the US and then the Soviet Union is only secured when the Duchy conceals the superpowers that their space programme is ready to roll. In fact, the task is to repair the plumbing on

Margaret Thatcher's mauling can be but harassment is unproductive means that a moon rocket is, indeed, constructed.

As a satire on Britain's much reduced status on the global stage, *Roared* is light years ahead. But, like Gilliam's humorously large loss in state in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, *The Mouse on the Moon* is a satire on the true spirit of Britain's endeavor – where, in the face of American can-do dynamism and Soviet science glorified tech pay, both Britain pay for even rubbers, endlessly malleable engine of progress like Chemical Xerox.

For also

The Quatermass Experiment (Ed Gass, 1955)
A Grand Day Out (Nick Park, 1995)
Zombieland (Drew Barrymore, 2007)

3 5

CHAPTER SIX

DONT BELIEVE THE HYPE
INCOMING MOVIES
LAID BARE

Alice in Wonderland. Dir Tim Burton

Where hell or high water, a new Tim Burton outing will always be worth a look. *Beowulf* Todd and chocolate factory had detractors and fans in equal measure, so it'll be interesting to see how the director handles Alice in Wonderland — arguably the most covered source material of his career to date. On the one hand the teeny-bop darkness and misanthropic vision of Lewis Carroll's classic could be a perfect fit for Burton on the other, there's always a rank that has insatiable style will reimagine the book's imagery, rather than complement it. Then there's the book. Johnny Depp will feature, which — look apparently Mark Hamill as not to play Tweedledee and Tweedledum. If this turns out to be a good idea, we'll not see and hate. **ETA: March 2010**

Revolutionary Road. Dir Sam Mendes

Sam Mendes undertakes the disintegrating dynamic of 'ordinary' people, but as well as the director, the time is now right for *Revolutionary Road*. Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio will remain to play a Communist family who dream of raising above the world around them, but who are ultimately doomed to failure. In 1970, Richard Yates described his original novel as being a response to the 'blind, desperate clinging to safety and security at any price, as exemplified in the Eisenhower administration and the Joe McCarthy witchhunts.' As we continue to regress into redemptive and destructive ideologies today, *Revolutionary Road* could make a serious impact. **ETA: January 2010**

The Shock Doctrine. Dir Michael Winterbottom

In ECONOMISTS, MORAL FIELD is an intellectual rig: Sapper who confuses corporate greed with capitalism's systemic evil. To us normal folk, *The Shock Doctrine*, Klein's study of disaster capitalism and the way in which the world has been hijacked by a neo-liberal elite, is a normal palette for our times — a book that lifts the veil of history and allows us to see such a parenting clearly. James and Alfonso Cuarón clearly thought so, since they adapted the story for a shock that played at TIFF '07. But now Michael Winterbottom is to give it the proper documentary treatment. It's a perfect marriage of men and material given Winterbottom's history of actually conscious filmmaking. With *The Shock Doctrine* also set for release next, anti-globalism has clearly got more goes right now. **ETA: Late 2009**

White Jazz. Dir Joe Cornish

Ever since *28* Cornish's reimagined the epidemic in 1997, rumors have been floating around about an adaptation of the 'sequel', *White Jazz*. Now thanks Joe Cornish is currently the man in the hot seat, but when about the actors? Will Gay Victor returns as Det. Lt. Ed Bailey? Well, actually, we asked him last time we spoke, and thus is what he had to say: 'I don't know if that's actually happening or not. My agent said to me it was looking around, but I sort of said, 'Well, well, we'll see', because it would purely depend on who was doing it. If Cornish himself was going to be doing the sequel I'd consider it. But I don't hold a huge amount of interest in pursuing it for the sake of it. *Bottom Line*: don't hold your breath. **ETA: Late 2009**





The Brothers Bloom.

By Kim Janner

Inexplicably, most people don't like Adam Bloom's debut, *Bloom*, a patchy black war that misquipped the genre as high-stakes high-school drama, complete with its own dubious moral code and unpredictable plotline. Its misdirection is aimed for his second feature, *The Brothers Bloom*, a good old-fashioned con movie that subverts around some of Old Europe's most glamorous locations with a cast full of beautiful movie stars—Adam Brody and Mark Ruffalo are the titular siblings lining up a bored heiress (Rachel Watson) for 'one last job'—to be, right?—word is, this is a far more successful showing from Johnson than nevertheless is bristling with ideas, not all of them successful... The real draw may yet prove to be Watson, however, who is said to be as hot as her much-captivated. A measure of her commitment to the role may be found in the fact that she apparently learned to play the piano, violin and harp, as well as mastering the dark art of brookdowning to ensure that she prevailed. **SEE** Early 2007

The Tree of Life.

By Terence Malick

Proof that Terence Malick's *The Tree of Life* was, in fact, a work of metaphysical genius arrives in the guise of Brad Pitt. He badly did he misjudge Malick's brilliance—unfathomably basing on the project more months before shooting began—than he's come crawling back to the theme in Terence Malick's *The Tree of Life*. Working on the 'Mick's personal piece that focuses on a race to find the legendary wellspring of life, inspired by 'a loss of innocence' (that did, indeed), was originally supposed to start in 2006. A change in financing scuppered that plan, and also put paid to the involvement of original leading man Colin Farrell. But it all worked out—filming returned to Malick's favoured southern American landscapes, and the movie is now in the can. He may be one of those maverick directors—with an army of people looking *The Tree of Life* just another piece of introspective meandering as a meditative masterpiece—but the fact remains that a new Malick is always on track to be released. **SEE** End 2008



LW/Lies hangs with the undead on the set of new British 'zom-com', *Tormented*.

"Can you see my face?" in the Spanish *Survivor*. Wilson asks before filming a graveyard scene for director Jon Wright's first feature, the latest *Blackish* comedy/horror film *Tormented*, and it's easy to see why. Despite playing a character apparently yanked out of puberty, "Michaela" is one of the resident ladies in the secondary school-out *Black* and she looks the part by sporting a pair of vertiginous heels and a skirt so short the early sketches of her tights are clearly visible.

Then again, with the tongue not firmly in cheek it'd be wrong to expect anything other than high-school horror stereotypes being shamelessly turned on their head in the name of comedy and ridiculously gory deaths. But amongst the verdant set pieces and zombie action, there's a more sinister element to *Tormented*, as the one doing the murdering is a boy back from the dead who was so brutally bullied he took his own life. It's a talking point that will no doubt follow the film through to its release, but screen *Appl. Director* (Josh Boone on *Shine*) Michaela is clear about the film's stance on bullying. "We're not making a mockery of bullying, it's an issue and it isn't being presented or undermined," she promises.

Micmacs à Tire-Larigot.

By Jean-Pierre Jeunet

After reportedly pulling out of the adaptation of *Life of Pi*, this will now be the next work from Jean-Pierre Jeunet. There seems to be something changing gears (think *Amélie* retrospective to *Amélie* in one week) the French director will this time try his hand at retelling the global arms trade. Filming is currently underway, with online sources suggesting the English title will be *Body Dealings by the Moon* - which makes it sound like a bad Steve Martin remake. Don't let that put you off though. Jeunet is collaborating with his usual co-writer Guillaume Laurant and star Berenice Bejo, for what we're hoping will be a film that's as innovative and stylish as his previous work. **ETA: Mid 2015**

Mammoth.

By Luke Woodgreen

This will be the first English-language piece from Luke Woodgreen, the musical theatre writer brought on the tender *Jack and Jill* and the posthumous *Julia Roberts*. Woodgreen's last two films either passed as the work of his growing reputation, embracing narrative in favour of experimental soundscapes and genuine footage of genital surgery. *Mammoth* should tread a more mainstream path: a tragedy that follows a US businessman (Gael García Bernal) in Thailand, his kids and the family said back home, and the man's own family in the Philippines. Given the director's political leanings, we're expecting something in the vein of *Rebel* - but let's hope he leaves out the bloody virgin shots this time. **ETA: February 2015**

Life During Wartime.

By Todd Solondz

The work of Todd Solondz may be an acquired taste, but the man himself certainly knows how to provoke an audience. His 1995 feel-bad comedy, *Happy Days*, was so nasty an ending billed in the toilet bowl — though thankfully it was also a hell of a lot funnier, showcasing the miserable lives of three downcast women in New Jersey. A sequel of sorts, *Life During Wartime*, will resurrect characters from both that film and from 1993's *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, though it's possible that multiple actors will play the same characters, à la *Falsettos*. Paul 'New Man' Giamatti, Hays Deyar, Ross Marquand and Jane Thompson are all rumored to be aboard. Filming was due to start in 2006, but work is proving, so further details should arrive soon. **ETA: Late 2009**

Me and Orson Welles.

By Richard Linklater

Linklater the filmmaker strikes again. Who in the early '70s would have predicted that by now the self-styled cinematic auteur would have two children's comedies, two psychological dramas, a *Boy's Don't Cry* western and a corporate satire under his belt? He looks set to pass off the coherent oeuvre police once again with this film about a pre-Keanu Green Willis putting in a Broadway production of *Julius Caesar*. While Linklater is usually able to pull off whatever he turns his hand to, this project has two potential liabilities: (1) the fact that his only other pre-youth culture film, *The Newton Boys*, was also his biggest failure, and (2) the inexplicable presence of high school senior's Ben Affleck. Still, Linklater has repeatedly managed to lead credibility to where he'd like, so perhaps there's hope. **ETA: Early 2009**

The Boat That Rocked.

By Richard Curtis

They, we all, it's a Richard Curtis film. There's a very English tone, a 'lively' but honest story, and a big story: cost featuring an stellar American (Philip Seymour Hoffman) and loads of much loved Brits. Not long on a second, what's *The Boat That Rocked*? It's ladies and gentlemen a saga of the changing times, then now offering from the four weddings will star Curtis's former co-star, Welsh scruffing Ewan McGregor. Apparently, this time our shipwreck love story is between 'the people' and 'the money'. Set on Radio Rock, a 'Rite parade station on the North Sea, we're looking at every young thing looking the system and sticking it to The Man. Let's drink our fingers for a rocking soundtrack and visual reminiscence of *Billboard* & *IT*, rather than *Austin Powers*. **ETA: May 2009**

UNCOMING

Sometimes, history seems to have it in for cinema, with potentially great projects falling by the wayside. Let's make a glance to the films that got away.

Dune (1975).

Supposed director Alejandro Jodorowsky

As even his most ardent fans will admit, David Lynch's adaptation of George Herbert's *Dune* (1984) is not a very good film. However, you're good, so. The whole movie is largely dismissed by followers of Lynch and Herbert alike. Yet there could have been an alternative, some time years previously, if the legendary Alejandro Jodorowsky had his way.

If all had gone to plan, the director of questionable rationality would have assembled an incredible cast: his son, Brontis, as Paul Atreides, Mick Jagger to take on Feyd, while Orson Welles would play the bloated Baron. Best of all, Salvador Dali was called upon to play the emperor. The Spanish surrealist, over the humble artist, demanded no less than \$100,000 per hour. Jodorowsky consulted a lot of tarot cards and elected to pay the man — but exhausted his shooting time to junk the man.

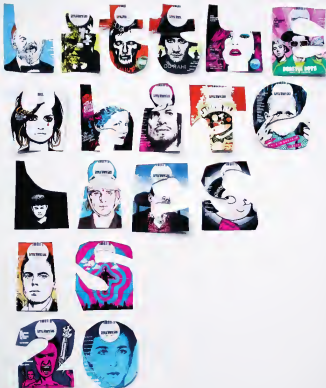
Even more aggressive rumors were prepared as the Atreides made of proceedings. Aside from grabbing punk riffs for the soundtrack, Jodorowsky urged Bechman and H. Giger to design the film's look. Both artists — and a then-unknown writer by the name of Dan O'Bannon — would later be recruited for Ridley Scott's *Alien*. The project itself fell through in the late '70s, but critics believe that the storyboard, widely circulated around Hollywood, went on to influence *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner* and many other films that followed.

Jodorowsky believes his vision was rejected for being too unconventional, and it's certainly not hard to see why. It's anyone's guess as to what the final film would have looked like, but it's fair to say that it would have been culturally different from Lynch's version — and indeed from Herbert's original novel. Jodorowsky admits that his script was very much his own creation, not that he has any shame about the changes he made.

"Dune didn't belong to Herbert just as *Ben Hur* didn't belong to Cervantes," he once wrote. "Christ didn't belong to Mark, Luke, Matthew or John. There are many more Gospels called 'apocryphal', and there are so many lines of Christ as there are believers. Every one of us has their story of Dune."

Starting words. It's just a shame that we will never see his.

Chances of resurrection: Not if you read the last sentence? We will never see it. Never.



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